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VIDEO

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BUYING GUIDE**

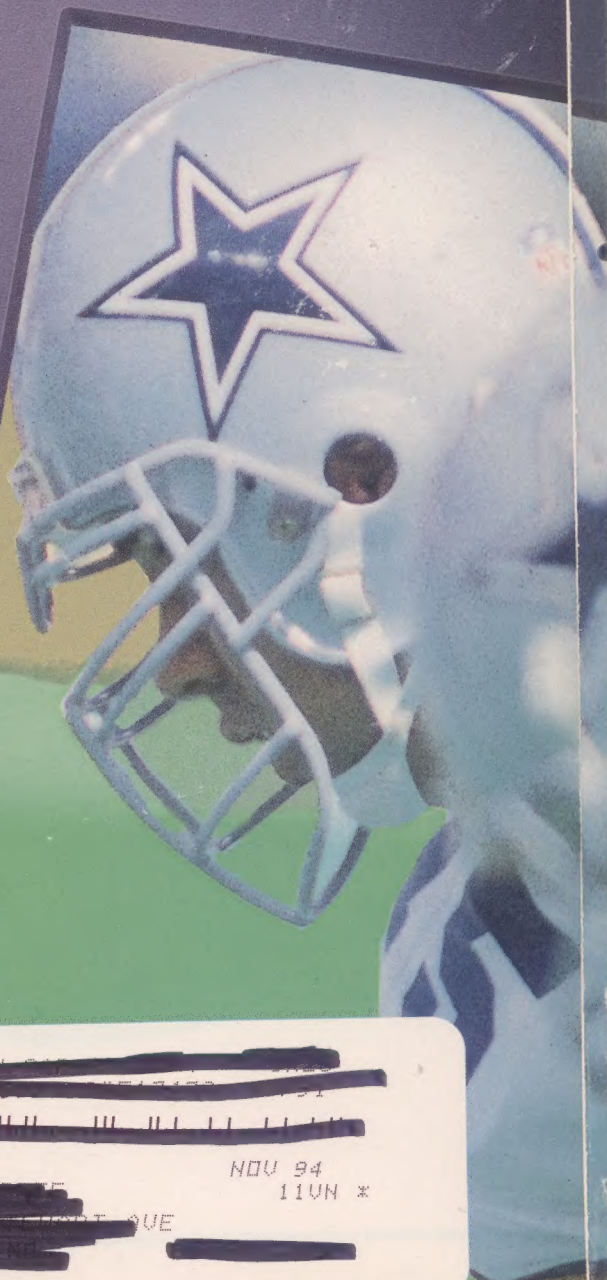
SPECIAL REPORT

**THE WORLD'S
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**HOME THEATER
SPEAKERS**

VIDEOTESTS

16 x 9 Projection TV,
VHS VCR, 8mm Viewcam,
Hi8 'Steady' Cam



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Announcing the
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take phone messages
and work with
your video camera,
VCR and TV.



In fact, they'll do just about

"Computer, call Michelle Dunn."

With Apple GeoPort, you can turn your AV computer (in this case, the Macintosh Centris 660Av) into a telephone and an answering machine. The hands-free phone lets you do work on-screen while you talk. And both computers have ES-F2F software, so all you need is a video camera to hold a video-conference across a local area network.

"Computer, read me today's mail!"

These computers will actually speak to you, reading aloud your e-mail, documents or spreadsheet numbers. Our new Apple AudioVision[®] Display, with its sensitive microphone and built-in speakers, is the perfect all-in-one monitor for speech capabilities, multimedia presentations and more.

"Computer, fax letter to Steve Wingate."

Forget the fax machine. The optional Apple GeoPort[™] Telecom Adaptor includes fax and modem software—everything you need to send and receive faxes from your desk or use on-line services. And both computers let you try out ExperFax, an application that converts your faxes into text.



t anything you tell them to.

"Computer, open my word processor."

Now work the most intuitive way. With Apple PlainTalk™, AV computers (here, the Macintosh Quadra 840AV) can recognize spoken commands—you just speak naturally. We've also included QuickKeys OSA Component software, so you can create your own verbal commands, like "Computer, open my word processor."

"Computer, start video"

Just plug a video camera, VCR or laserdisc player into the back of either AV computer. The FusionRecorder software included lets you easily capture video and single-frame snapshots, or record 16-bit stereo sound. You can paste your videos directly into presentations, documents or any software that supports QuickTime.

"Computer, display Macintosh on TV"

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"Computer, play CD"

Add the AppleCD™ 300i disc drive to either machine, and you can access huge libraries of clip art, sound effects, video clips and more. Or just play your own music CDs while you work.

The Macintosh Centris 660AV and Macintosh Quadra 840AV

You've probably read that telephones, computers, television and other technologies will converge soon.

This is where they meet. Introducing the Macintosh Centris™ 660AV and Macintosh Quadra™ 840AV personal computers. These two computers offer a suite of communication capabilities called Apple® AV Technologies: a telecommunications center, easy video input/output connections, voice recognition and text-to-speech abilities.

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Apple AV Technologies.

Telecommunications, video, speech — all the ways you communicate.

Many of these new functions are sped along by a digital signal processor (this chip flies through data at the rate of 55 MHz in the Macintosh Centris and an even faster 66 MHz in the Macintosh Quadra).

With a 25 MHz 68040 processor and up to 68MB of RAM, the Macintosh Centris has the horsepower required to breeze through huge spreadsheets and documents. And there's room to add a 500MB internal hard disk, a CD-ROM or SyQuest drive and a NuBus expansion card.

The new Macintosh Quadra will make publishing, graphic design and other communications professionals salivate. Its 40 MHz 68040 processor and up to 128MB of RAM make it the most powerful Macintosh ever. And it has room for a gigabyte of hard disk storage, four internal storage devices and three NuBus expansion cards.

Best of all, you can get a Macintosh with Apple AV Technologies starting at \$2,489*. Once again, Apple puts the most amazing kind of power within your reach. The power to be your best.®



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Cover:

Thirteen 27-inch TVs clash on our home video playing field. Pictured are Toshiba's CN27C90 and Hitachi's 27AX4B. TV photograph by Les Morsillo, scrimmage by Bob Tringali, Jr./Sportschrome.

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CHANNEL ONE



The littlest big screen

A 27-inch TV isn't very big in these days of 40-inch tube sets and front-projection models that can throw an eight-foot picture with excellent quality. But as the threshold measurement for genuinely affordable "big-screen" home theater, the 27-inch set is proving to be a very popular size for enthusiasts with limited budgets or space.

There are good arguments too, that 27 inches is the optimum size for picture resolution, given the limitations inherent in spreading electron beams over wider surfaces. But whatever your reason for choosing this size set you're likely to find one that suits your tastes and wallet.

Because of the popularity of 27-inch televisions, most manufacturers produce them, creating a wide variety of brands from which to choose. So picking the right one for your circumstances can be truly daunting. We thought we'd give you some help by conducting one of our patented "shoot-outs" (see "27-Inch Superbowl") evaluating and comparing in side-by-side viewing sessions a baker's dozen of brand-new models from the major manufacturers. See which one is best for your home theater.

If it's a Hi8 camcorder you have on your shopping list, check out assistant editor Brian Clark's "Hi8 Buying Guide" that highlights the benefits of the format and charts the features. Carry the article with you right into the store when you venture out for a hands-on test-shoot.

We had the good fortune to travel to Berlin recently to attend the Internationale Funkausstellung (IFA), the world's biggest electronics fair—it attracts half a million attendees over a 10-day period run (see "Berlin Diary"). The trip proved to be an excellent adventure, combining a look at the latest home video equipment designed for the European and world markets, with a look at a vibrant city in the process of reinventing itself after the long, dark night of the Cold War.

A few days in Berlin underscores the fact that the world is indeed getting smaller, and that the equipment that provides enjoyment for video-philosophers is becoming more universal. For a generation the world has looked to Japan and Europe for innovations in consumer electronics, but it was evident at IFA that the outlook has changed. As the world of video becomes a digital domain, Europe and Asia are again looking to America—for a digital TV transmission standard and for the next generation of innovative interactive equipment and programs that employ digital video.

The digital age in video is upon us and the good news is it's dawning in the USA.

James M. Barry
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*Letterbox

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Cartrivision and too many channels

Timing is everything

I read George Mannes' article "Video Visionaries" with great interest. These men deserve all the credit given them in your September issue. In 1970, I was sent to Sunnyvale, California to provide engineering assistance on a machine that would be Avco's Cartrivision Video Player. My job was to finalize production drawings in the new assembly areas being built at Avco's Precision Products plant in Richmond, Indiana.

Engineering models had been built and tested, and Sears had committed to a large order of Crosley color TVs, which had the Cartrivision units in them. Tapes recorded on the machine were excellent. Why did the product fail? The downfall was tapes produced on high-speed duplicating machines, where tracking became a big problem. Everyone says the Crosley automobile was ahead of its time. The same proved true with this VCR, which was out five years before Sony's Betamax.

Frank M. Shea
Cincinnati, Ohio

Dollars and sense

Your feature "Nonstop Revolution" in the 15th Anniversary issue (Sept. '93) maintains that VHS succeeded where

Beta's Descent:
Detail from "Is Beta Sinking?" *Video Magazine's* Aug. '85 cover story.



Beta did not, due to RCA's marketing and VHS' longer recording time. I believe the downfall of the Beta system was largely due to Sony's overpricing. When I bought my Panasonic PV-1100 in 1980 for \$850, Sony was selling a two-piece VCR for \$1,600, and that did not include the timer! Which format would you buy?

Jerry Talbert
Eudora, Kansas

No, no, 500 times no

Five hundred channels? Of what? The technology is here, but the programming isn't. Even with new systems for finding what all these channels are showing (each with its own price), one would spend more time looking for programs than watching them. HDTV is just a matter of time, but what do we have that needs it? Just the same dreary stuff that no amount of improved transmission would help.

Harry L. Echols
Hyattsville, Maryland

Closed captions, opened world

I have three TVs and three VCRs plus a caption box, as I am deaf. My greatest enjoyment comes from watching captioned TV and tapes. I'd like to thank the people in the various industries that have made captioning possible. It has changed the way of life for many hard-of-hearing and deaf people.

James E. Dawson
Toms River, New Jersey

Basic Widescreen

As the owner of a home entertainment center with two VCRs, a laserdisc player, a surround-sound receiver, five speakers and a 25-inch monitor, I was excited to read about the coming of widescreen TV and, eventually, HDTV ("Why Widescreen?" May '93). The ideal way for me to step into widescreen would be with a monitor—just a monitor. It would have inputs for my surround-sound receiver (video only) and for future HD laserdisc players and VCRs. It would not have a surround decoder, and the only speaker would be a high-quality center speaker for output from my receiver. By eliminating useless features, manufacturers could reduce the cost of these new sets, enabling more consumers to upgrade.

Eric K. Andersen
Hoboken, New Jersey

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How *Sliver* earned an 'R'

▶▶ You read about it all the time: A director agrees to make an R-rated picture but it eventually comes back with an NC-17. Not wanting to be seen as censors, the Motion Picture Association of America ratings board refuses to spell out which shots were deemed offensive, so the film must be submitted again and

again with minor alterations in the hopes of earning an R. Such was the case with Paramount's *Sliver*, due on tape and disc in November. But don't seasoned directors and producers know when a particular shot will likely cause a ratings problem?

The answer is no, according to

Philip Noyce, director of *Sliver*, as well as *Patriot Games* and *Dead Calm*. "I was quite surprised," he says, referring to the few seconds of film that proved objectionable. The MPAA "was unhappy about a sex scene in which the female sits astride the male, and what's worse, seems to be enjoying it."

A native of Australia, Noyce says he's still surprised by America's apparent acceptance of violence in films, and its abhorrence of sex in the same medium. "Perhaps if that sex scene had ended with one partner shooting the other in the head, they would have let me keep it in," he says.

—Jon Silberg

A theater for every home

▶▶ Anyone who has shopped for home theater gear has probably confronted one of two problems: mass-merchandisers with bad demos, or high-end custom installers whose prices are best suited to rock stars. A team of New York-based custom installers is trying to eliminate this dilemma with a new concept in retailing.

The Home Theater Store is intended to bridge the gap between mass merchandisers and custom installers. Both

Home Theater Stores have showrooms with budget and high-end systems. You can see and hear the equipment in settings much like normal living rooms, so you can get an accurate idea how it will look and sound in your home. You get the staff's full attention: All demos are by appointment only.

Trained installers help you select the best gear for your budget, design custom cabinetry for your room, and install the system. Store founder Elliot Ingber says prices are significantly below those charged by most custom installers.

Considering how complex a home theater can be, it's about time someone tried building a retailing concept around it, rather than dumping home theater in with the \$200 VCRs and boom boxes. If you're in the Northeast, you can check out the Home Theater Stores in Williston Park and Tappan, New York; more stores are planned. For more information, call 516-248-6700.

—Brent Butterworth

Help is on the way

▶▶ When they say "Make it a Blockbuster night," they don't mean you



Videos on Disc: MovieSelect's access screen to 44,000 films.

should spend it in the video store, wandering aimlessly through the aisles in search of something you might enjoy. You can conduct a far more fruitful and less time-consuming quest in the comfort of your own home with *MovieSelect* (\$59.95) from Paramount Interactive.

Available on CD-ROM in Mac and MPC formats or on floppy disc for Mac, *MovieSelect* contains a database of 44,000 films, each with production credits, stars, director and a brief synopsis. The database is completely cross-referenced: Click on a director's or actor's name and you'll get his or her's complete filmography.

But *MovieSelect* is more than just another video guide. Using fuzzy logic, the program suggests films you may like in 22 categories, such as "triumph of the

Technology parade

Video buffs in the New York City area should make a beeline for Astoria. For a fifth-anniversary spectacular, the American Museum of the Moving Image has collected nearly 1,000 pieces of film, television and video equipment chronicling the entire history of moving images, from mechanical TV sets of the 1920s to last year's camcorders, from old movie cameras to early VCRs. The collection, one of the largest of its kind, will be on display at least through the end of the year. For further information, call 718-784-0077.



spirit," "intelligent/literate" and, my favorite, "sexually charged," along with the more pedestrian video store categories. *MovieSelect* bases its recommendations on information you've supplied about which titles you've already seen and enjoyed, and uses hundreds of film-preference surveys conducted by the program's authors as a reference. As a bonus, each new edition of *MovieSelect* will present full-motion QuickTime previews of coming video attractions. *The Firm* and *Indecent Proposal* are among the dozen trailers included on the current edition. —Stewart Wolpin



Oz meets THX: Dorothy and friends are back in a version for connoisseurs.

Miracle goes low, Oz high

▶▶ Image Entertainment will make video history in November when it releases the first full-length \$14.98 laserdisc. Breaking the price barrier will be FoxVideo's new colorized version of *Miracle on 34th Street*, the beloved holiday classic starring Edmund Gwenn, Maureen O'Hara and Natalie Wood. A cassette version will cost \$9.98. Unfortunately, Image has no plans to release additional titles at this oh-so-enticing price.

MGM/UA will also play Santa's helper this fall with its first THX-approved laserdisc, an elaborate *Wizard of Oz* boxed set called *The Ultimate Oz*. In addition to a new Technicolor restoration from the original nitrate negative of the film, it will include outtakes, behind-the-scene footage, a bound repro-

duction of the original continuity script, still photos and a running commentary from film historian John Fricke. Both the laserdisc set and a cassette version without THX approval and the running commentary will go for \$99.98. —KK

Smart cassettes

▶▶ VCRs can be made more useful and easier to use by making videocassettes smarter, and the best method for boosting cassette IQs is to build tiny memory chips into the shells.

Thomson Consumer Electronics re-

searchers Hans J. Platte, Ernest Schroder and Jens Spille proposed the idea at a summer gathering of consumer electronics scientists in Chicago. The trio says it's practical to equip cassettes for both prerecorded and home-made tapes with either magnetic stripes or EEPROM chips for storing electronic tables-of-contents, but that chips are the better choice.

VCRs would read and display titles, locations and other helpful information about a tape's contents from the smart, chip-bearing cassettes. The system would let a viewer "enjoy recorded programs without being troubled with counters, addresses, his own notes, and regular updating and checking procedures," according to the researchers.

The chief drawback is cost, but the

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Picture quality better than VHS and one disc for a film."

—MICHAEL SCHULHOF, president of Sony America, when asked to give his minimum criteria for Video CD.

group believes rapidly dropping chip prices will make "application of the memory-in-cassette method for consumer VCRs" cost-effective in the near future. —Stan Pinkwas

Dial 'C' for cable

▶▶ Police in Oakland, New Jersey had to traipse over to the local cable company, Tele-Communications, Inc., recently with a plea to broadcast a message asking residents to stop calling them. Angry cable subscribers were even calling the 911 emergency number to complain about the new cable lineup, higher rates and their inability to reach TCI by phone on September 1 when the new cable law went into effect.

"It got so bad at one point," a police officer said, "we thought, 'Let's just answer the phone — TCI.'" Police officials say they fielded 200 calls.

Ounce of prevention

▶▶ Call it "Kidcam." A Texas company is marketing a camcorder in a small black box for use in school buses to monitor the kiddies while the driver keeps his or her eyes on the road. K & F Manufacturing of Anahuac sells cameras for \$950 and a box for \$64.95 for its patented system to keep the kids in line and reduce vandalism and fighting on school buses. The company recommends a box in every bus but only one camera for every 10 vehicles to keep kids guessing.

THE NUMBER

78,816

—Number of pixels of resolution on the three-inch LCD screen on Sony's new 8mm snap camcorder.

We want to know

▶▶ According to the FCC, up to 75 percent of cable subscribers will see their monthly cable bills drop by 10 percent under new cable rules that went into effect in September. That's an estimated nationwide savings of \$1 billion.

How did you do? We'd like to know if your cable bill went down, or up (and by how much) or if it remained the same. We'll publish the results of this informal survey in a future issue. Send responses to Cable Bill, Video Magazine, 460 West 34 Street, NY, NY 10001.

TIMESHIFT TEN YEARS AGO IN VIDEO MAGAZINE

"If the Supreme Court agrees with the Ninth Circuit Court opinion in the Betamax Case, we will become criminals every time we use our VCRs to record TV broadcasts in our homes. That's because we will have broken what Congress has passed as copyright law....Action For Children's Television has filed a petition with the FCC asking broadcasters to insert a signal at the beginning and end of TV ads aimed at children. On specially equipped sets, that signal would cue the TV to blank

out the screen for the duration of the ad... 'Tis the season for Halloween and pro sports. New releases this month include The Texas Chainsaw Massacre and The Boys of Summer... Ready

to have your mind boggled? Consider the following list of current VCR bells and whistles: front loading, multi-event programmability, full function wireless remotes, and built-in camera jacks."

Late Breaking News

THE CUSTOM Electronics Design and Installation Association (CEDIA) show in Dallas in September saw the introduction of two impressive new video monitors.

First was Runco's Super IDTV 900, a data-grade projector with a new, integral line doubler. The 900's doubler may be the closest thing we've seen to the near-perfection of the Faroudja LD-100. Second was Mitsubishi's first reduced-curvature TV set, a 27-inch model that on first look resembles Panasonic's excellent Gao sets, in appearance and video performance.

The show's aural highlights included the Onyx speaker system, which achieves performance similar to that of a THX system, but with a brighter, more ambient sound; JBL's HT speaker system, a compact, THX-approved array priced under \$3,000; and two new speakers from Atlantic Technologies—a promising \$300/pair dipolar surround speaker and a subwoofer that's larger and more powerful than the one included with the company's Pattern 150 system.

THE DAVID SARNOFF Research Center has teamed up with Texas Instruments on a four-year, Pentagon-funded project to develop the latter's unique projection technology. The system displays images by using a silicon structure supporting more than two million "micromirrors" designed to pivot on tiny hinges. Voltage changes in tiny electrodes beneath the mirrors mechanically control their tilt to project detailed digital pictures.

ELECTRONICS COMPANIES that don't have a global vision and don't integrate hardware and software will have increasing trouble in the future, according to the man at the helm of one of the biggest electronics companies in the world.

In a discussion with members of the press at the International Funkausstellung in Berlin, Alain Prestat, chairman and CEO of Thomson (parent company of RCA, GE and ProScan), indicated that his company will venture into the software realm when its financial position is stronger and the opportunity is right. Prestat noted that Thomson "will have to become more and more integrated" in its approach to hardware and software, but "it's unrealistic to invest in soft-

ware in today's financial situation."

"There's no longer room for regional companies," Prestat said. "There are many examples of regional companies in the U.S., Europe and even in Japan who can't compete. Those who aren't worldwide will be in trouble."

IF YOU'RE A STILL PHOTOgrapher as well as a videographer, you can use videotape to copyright your photographs. You'll need to send the Federal copyright office a VHS tape in which each photographic image is visible for at least two seconds, with no part of the tape left blank. At this rate, a two-hour tape can hold up to 3,600 images, making the system far more compact than sending slides or prints. A full description of the process can be found in *White Paper of Copyright Registration*, a \$10 publication of the American Society of Media Photographers. For more information, call ASMP at 609-799-8300.

PIONEER OFFICIALS SAID THE company's LaserActive player, which went on sale in the U.S. last month, got off to a roaring start in Japan, selling 10,000 units in its first three weeks.

PHILIPS BEGAN SELLING A NEW low-priced model of its CD-I player under the Magnavox brand last month with a street price of \$399. Philips also altered CD-I software packaging to conform to the standard CD jewel box size—a welcome but overdue move.

TWO-THIRDS OF AVERAGE American consumers think television should be more interactive, according to a study for EON Corp. (formerly TV Answer), a Reston, Virginia-based marketer of an interactive TV system.

IT WAS A RECORD SUMMER FOR video rental stores and movie theaters as total revenues exceeded \$4 billion, according to the trade newspaper *Video Store*. Video rentals, led by \$15.5 million for *Distinguished Gentleman*, soared to a \$1.46 billion while *Jurassic Park*'s \$300-million-plus gross paced theaters to \$2.13 billion in admissions.

WANT TO MAKE A BIG MONEY-making movie? A good start would be to sign Harrison Ford for a starring role. Ford is likely to become a billion-dollar man as *The Fugitive* rushes toward \$200 million in revenues. Ford has starred in four other \$200-million-plus films—the three *Star Wars* epics and *Raiders of The Lost Ark*.

video
The #1 Magazine of Home Video

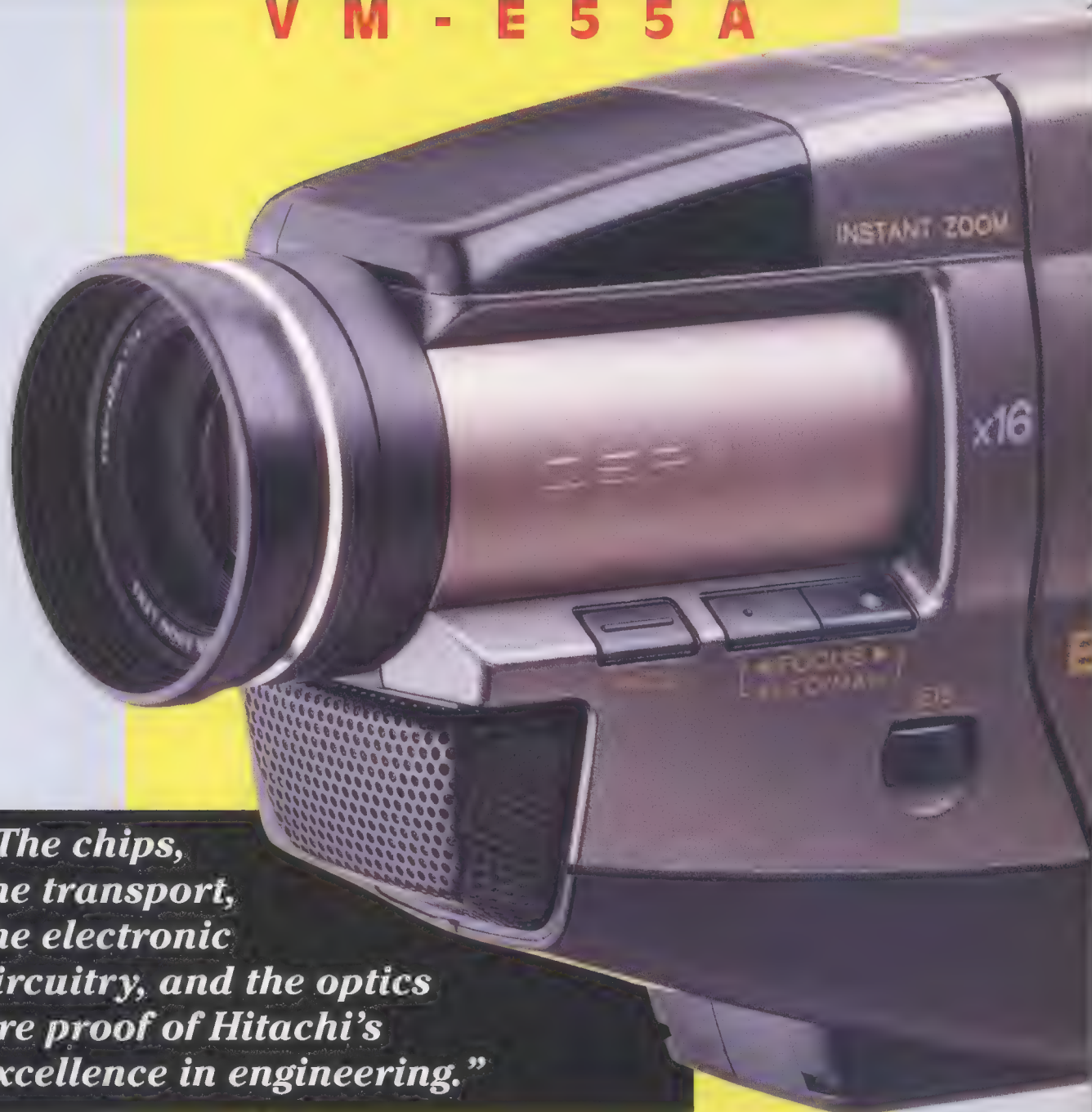
A Close-up Look at Tiny TVs
Early Warnings: VCR Problems. Watch For
The Betamax Case: Is No News Good News?



November 1983

I N S I D E T H E
HITACHI

V M - E 5 5 A



*"The chips,
the transport,
the electronic
circuitry, and the optics
are proof of Hitachi's
excellence in engineering."*

INSIDE THE HITACHI VM-E55A CAMCORDER

Automatic white balance and auto iris functions are controlled by artificial intelligence circuitry to deliver picture perfection.

Advanced 270,000 pixel CCD optimizes the clarity of the 8mm video system.



Streamlined and ergonomic design maximizes creative flexibility.

Hitachi's acclaimed electronic image stabilization system.

ORDER

Digital and Instant zoom settings provide immediate and accurate scene magnification.



THE RIGHT PRODUCT

To achieve true engineering excellence, a camcorder must be great without drawing overt attention to its greatness. The camcorder must address real working needs. It must be easy-to-use, perform flawlessly, maximize creativity, and produce videos that exemplify the state-of-the-art. The engineering must be present but invisible. Easier said than done.

With their new 8mm VM-E55A, the engineers of Hitachi have developed an attractive and ergonomic camcorder that is much more than just another "pretty face." The VM-E55A's superlative performance is built into the chips, transport, electronic circuitry, and optical system — proof of Hitachi's leadership in video engineering and design.

THE RIGHT FEATURES

The VM-E55A offers feature advancements ordinarily reserved for much heavier and higher-priced models. It is a diminutive (3 5/8 x 4 1/2 x 8-inch), lightweight (1.9 lbs) camcorder that videotapes effectively in light as low as 1 lux, with a unique

For more information on the Hitachi VM-E55A, please write to:
Hitachi Home Electronics (America), Inc., Customer Service Dept.,
3890 Steve Reynolds Boulevard, Norcross, GA 30093-3012
or call **1-800-HITACHI**

HITACHI

electronic image stabilization system and a 16:1 power zoom. Its autofocus system uses a foolproof through-the-lens approach and its white balance and auto iris are both controlled by a highly-sophisticated artificial intelligence circuit. Its digitally programmed autoexposure system provides perfect pictures with pinpoint accuracy.

Hitachi engineers surveyed camcorder users and found that both shooting and editing are of equal importance to today's videographer. As a result, insert editing and dual-machine synchro-edit control are added for post-production utility. A lens macro setting lets you shoot subjects as close as 3/8-inch, while the shutter speed automatically switches between 1/60 and 1/4000 seconds.

The camcorder is designed for someone who truly cares about picture quality and creative options. Yet it is still very easy to use. This user-friendly engineering is even extended to the remote that controls both the camcorder and most brands of TV.

THE RIGHT ENGINEERING

The engineering advancements that define the VM-E55A begin at the microprocessor level. Hitachi has applied its international R&D muscle to an innovative miniaturized microprocessor architecture that enhances



The Hitachi VM-E55A 8mm camcorder is more than just a pretty face.

even standard camcorder functions.

The VM-E55A's zoom offers an array of microprocessor-controlled options. A Digital Zoom function extends the range of the power zoom to 16-times, while an Instant Zoom button magnifies any scene instantly an additional 1.5-times. The camcorder is also smart enough to automatically focus on the subject in the center of the viewfinder unless the manual focus is engaged.

Other dedicated microprocessors operate Hitachi's acclaimed Electronic Image Stabilizer, which is known throughout the industry for removing extraneous motions without image degradation. Three fade modes are digitally encoded: white fade (standard fade), curtain-wipe fade (whereby two vertical curtains wipe the scene off the screen), and zoom fade (zooming to a white screen). An electronic character generator stores two different titles in memory and allows users to customize their titles with two lines of 16 characters for each title.

THE RIGHT DESIGN

Hitachi's designers have fashioned a streamlined and well-balanced exterior that complements the unit's engineering aesthetic. Overall, the pride, quality, and advancements that went into the making of the VM-E55A are reflected in the fact that it is already the most successful camcorder debut in the company's history.

The Hitachi engineers have met the challenge. They have developed an 8mm camcorder that delivers the most important features and the most efficient operation for a most affordable price. Try it out for yourself to appreciate the accomplishment. You'll see why the VM-E55A truly represents Excellence in Engineering.



The multi-brand remote allows control of the camcorder and most TVs.

A radical Handycam, a TV turner and a wide new screen.



◀ **SNAPPY SONY**

Sony's answer to Sharp's ViewCam is the CCD-SC5 Handycam Snap!, an 8mm camcorder that has a three-inch LCD screen and an optical viewfinder as well. At 20 ounces, it's small enough to use comfortably with one hand. The lens switches between wide and telephoto settings, but lacks variable zoom. The Handycam Snap! (\$1,200) runs on Sony's lithium ion battery, and comes in gray or white colors.

▼ **TURN, TURN, TURN**

SEFIDCo's Turn Vision rests under your TV and, with a touch of your remote, turns the TV up to 90 degrees to the right or the left. Turn Vision learns any two signals from your remote. Models are available for TVs with screen sizes up to 35 inches. Prices run from \$199 to \$350. (For additional information, circle 102 on the Reader Service Card.)

▼ **BEAT BOX**

Definitive Technology's new PowerField 1500 (\$995) is a powered subwoofer system with a frequency response of 15 to 150 Hertz. A 250-watt amplifier and electronic crossover are built in, but removable. Its styling matches Definitive's BP Series loudspeakers. (For additional information, circle 107 on the Reader Service Card.)



PHILIPS WIDESCREEN ▶

Philips' entry into the widescreen market is the 34P560-C101, a 34-inch tube model priced at \$5,995. Features include picture-in-picture, picture-out-of-picture, Dolby Pro-Logic surround, S-video and audio/video jacks on both the front and rear panels, a graphic equalizer and a subwoofer. It also connects to personal computers for standard VGA display and has RGB inputs on the rear for potential use with an HDTV decoder. (For additional information, circle 108 on the Reader Service Card.)



NEW PRODUCTS



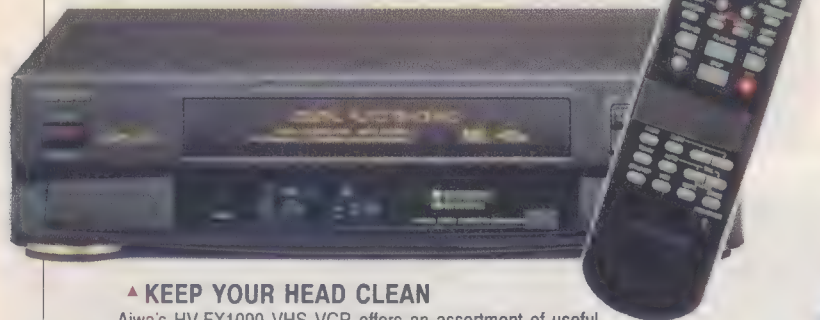
▲ PORTABLE PROJECTION

Sony's CPJ-7 portable LCD video projector (\$800) projects up to 100-inch images and weighs less than two pounds. It receives AC power through a detachable base that also serves as a stand for the projector. Audio features include stereo sound and a stereo audio output jack.



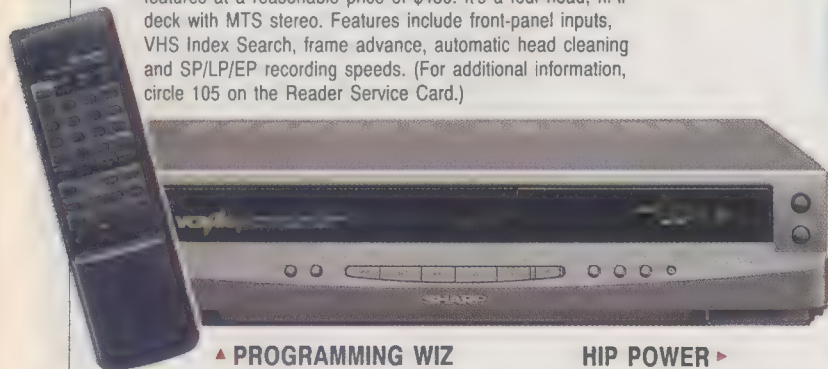
▲ INSTANT HOME THEATER

RCA's new Custom Home Theater line integrates big-screen TVs and essential audio/video components by RCA with custom cabinets from American Drew. The line covers 31 freestanding and in-wall configurations ranging in price from \$2,000 to \$10,000. Pictured is a top-level system in the "800 Series." It includes a 60-inch TV, a four-head VHS VCR, a combi player, a Dolby Pro Logic receiver/amplifier, surround sound speakers and all necessary cables. System installation is part of the package. (For further information, circle 106 on the Reader Service Card.)



▲ KEEP YOUR HEAD CLEAN

Aiwa's HV-FX1000 VHS VCR offers an assortment of useful features at a reasonable price of \$450. It's a four-head, hi-fi deck with MTS stereo. Features include front-panel inputs, VHS Index Search, frame advance, automatic head cleaning and SP/LP/EP recording speeds. (For additional information, circle 105 on the Reader Service Card.)



▲ PROGRAMMING WIZ

Sharp's VC-H907U VHS VCR (\$499) is a four-head deck that features VCR Plus programming with cable box control. Audio features include hi-fi sound with MTS decoding. (For additional information, circle 104 on the Reader Service Card.)

HIP POWER ▶

Sima's PowerPocket (\$49) holds three six-volt batteries. Plug your camcorder into the PowerPocket and when the first battery runs down, just flip a switch to draw power from the second, then the third battery. Batteries not included. (For additional information, circle 103 on the Reader Service Card.)



REALITY TV.



The real story in home entertainment today is Home Theater. The most *realistic* approach to Home Theater can be experienced with Infinity speakers. Not only do Infinity speakers employ proprietary



Clockwise left to right: RS625, Kappa 8.1, Infinitesimal Four Satellite & Subwoofer, Kappa Video

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Circle 2 on Reader Service Card.

Sony's SA-VA3 brings home theater to the mass market

Home theater has hit a wall—the wall between video/audio enthusiasts and the mass market. For home theater to make its way into more homes, it needs products that look nice in your den and are easy to use. After all, people who can't program VCRs sure aren't going to be able to hook up an A/V receiver with 50 jacks on the back.

Finally, we're starting to see some innovative solutions to home theater complexity. Last year, Mitsubishi's HTS-100 amplifier/decoder reduced home theater hookup to one set of line-level interconnects and five speaker cables. This year, Sony has gone one step further with the SA-VA3 Home Theater Active Speaker System, a set of four speakers with integral amplification and Dolby Pro-Logic decoding.

Each of the SA-VA3's two 45-inch-high tower speakers contains a separate, 6-1/2-inch active subwoofer, a five-inch woofer/midrange speaker, and two side-by-side, two-inch cone tweeters. The inside tweeter carries the signal for the left or right channel. The outside tweeter, which is angled in about 30 degrees, carries the center-channel signal. Sony's idea is that the angled tweeters will create a strong center image that makes up for the lack of a center speaker. The left woofer/midrange speaker carries sound from the center and left channels; the right speaker carries sound from the center and right channels. Two four-inch, one-way surround speakers are supplied.

The left tower contains the electronics. It has a convenient multifunction LED display that can be dimmed. Buttons for power, input, Pro-Logic on/off, surround on/off, subwoofer on/off and mute sit under the display. A door underneath the display provides access

to rotary controls for bass, treble, balance and center-channel tone; plus/minus button pairs for channel level; and various other buttons for seldom-used features like test tone and delay. An infrared remote control duplicates most of these buttons.

The speaker has two stereo audio inputs on the back, with loop-through outputs. You can connect your video sources directly to the SA-VA3 and loop them to the TV's inputs, or connect your TV's fixed-level audio output to the SA-VA3 and use the TV as a switcher. If you pursue the latter course,

the system is that it turns itself off when it hasn't received an audio signal for a couple of minutes—and it turns back on when you feed it a signal.

Listening to the SA-VA3 gave me the impression it was never intended for serious home theater. It's designed for those who are only using the speakers in their TVs, and who want to upgrade, but are more concerned with simplicity and looks than performance. This type of buyer would probably prefer not to have a center speaker cluttering up the top of the TV, no matter how dire the sonic consequences. These consumers

are sure to love the concept behind the SA-VA3. In fact, I'll be surprised if it isn't a resounding success.

However, while Sony's concept is definitely a winner, it's not well-implemented in the SA-VA3. The quasi-center speakers don't work as they should. As you move your head to the side, the sonic images of voices move right along with you, as they would with two conventional speakers. For one person sitting dead center, it sounds fine, and it might

work for two, if you don't mind cuddling up. But off-center listeners will be distracted because the voices won't come from the screen—they'll come from the tower speaker nearest them.

I can't see how it would be possible for the center speakers to work as intended. The woofer/midrange speakers are crossed over to the tweeters at 4.5 kilohertz, so they carry all the midrange and most of the first two treble octaves. That is to say, all of the voice and almost all of the foley effects and music. With the center-channel sound coming mainly from these two speakers, it's no wonder the sound moves to the side you're seated on. *continued on page 58 ▶*



User-Friendly Home Theater: The SA-VA3 system incorporates tower speakers with integral amplifiers, center speakers, Dolby Pro-Logic decoder and powered subwoofers, and two small surround speakers.

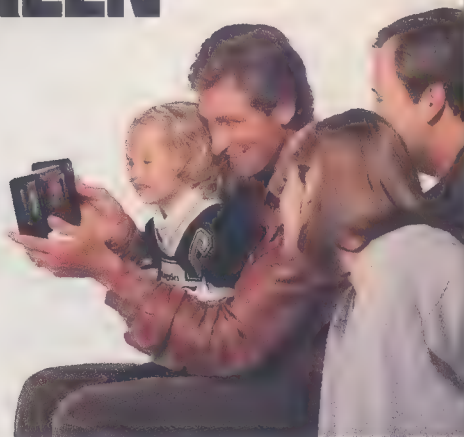
whatever you display on the TV will be piped to the SA-VA3. It also has a line-level center-channel output, so you can connect a powered center speaker.

Easy setup seems to have been Sony's primary goal for the SA-VA3. All you do is connect the tower speakers with a special multiconductor cable, connect the cables for the surround speakers to spring connectors at the base of the left tower speaker, then connect the audio source.

Indeed, it took me only 10 minutes or so to set up the SA-VA3. It's very easy to operate—once set up, you seldom have to touch anything but the volume control. My favorite thing about

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© 1993 Sharp Electronics Corporation. Simulated Screen Image. Model Shown: VL-E30U 8mm Camcorder.

Circle 3 on Reader Service Card.

How to combine shutter speed and iris settings for a perfect picture

Programmed auto exposure is quickly taking the place of manual camcorder controls. Most of these automatic systems optimize exposure for several common shooting situations, including portraits, sports events, backlighting, spotlighting and panoramas. To understand how programmed auto exposure affects the quality of your videos, you must take a closer look at its two subsystems—shutter speed and iris.

To understand the effect of shutter speed, first consider that all camcorders record moving images at a rate of 30 frames per second. Unlike movie cameras, which shoot on film at different frame rates, video shutter speed has no effect on the frame rate.

So what does a camcorder's high-speed shutter do? In a nutshell, it shortens the exposure for each video frame. Technically speaking, the image is not scanned a frame at a time—the image sensor uses interlacing (just like a TV screen), so the scanning consists of two successive video fields, representing the odd and even scan lines. Thirty frames per second translates into 60 fields per second. A normal camcorder shutter speed—1/60-second—accommodates

this rate perfectly.

The high-speed shutter is a purely electronic, not mechanical, feature. The image sensor takes a light reading at a much faster rate—up to 1/10,000-second—and this electronic information is held in memory for 1/60 of a second, at which point it's recorded onto tape as the next field.

The main purpose of the high-speed shutter is to facilitate slow-motion playback of sports recordings. When a golf swing, for example, is shot at a relatively slow shutter speed, then played back frame by frame, the golf club in each individual frame (or field) appears blurred. The blur represents the distance the club moved in 1/60 of a second. By speeding the image sensor exposure up to 1/1,000-second, the club does not appear blurred, and the amount of motion in a single field is vastly reduced.

But there's a price to be paid for the higher shutter speed: More light is needed to illuminate a subject, and the depth of focus becomes shallower. As with still photography, the overall exposure level in a camcorder depends on two factors—the iris (aperture) setting on the lens, and the exposure time (shutter speed).

The amount of light the aperture passes through to the image sensor is measured in f-stops. Each f-stop in this series—f/1.4, f/2, f/2.8, f/4, f/5.6, f/8, f/11, f/16, f/22—represents half as much light as the previous number. An exposure at a setting of f/4 and 1/500-second is thus equivalent to a setting of f/2.8 and 1/1,000-second.

When there's enough light, you can select from several combinations of iris and shutter speed to achieve the correct exposure. But many involve trade-offs between shutter speed and

depth of focus. The wider the aperture (smaller f-stop number), the shallower the depth of focus (or depth of field) becomes. Depth of focus is simply the distance within which subjects are in reasonably good focus. When you're shooting a subject 10 feet away, for example, a narrow depth means that only the area between nine and 11 feet will be in focus. With wide depth, everything from four feet to infinity may be in focus.

When shooting in low light, you have fewer options—the aperture must usually be set at the widest (smallest f-stop number) opening to get a decent image. Use of narrower aperture settings and fast shutter speeds are luxuries that can only be afforded in bright light.

Programmed auto exposure modes adjust both the shutter and the iris, according to certain rules. Rule number one is that in low light, the shutter will always be set to maximum exposure duration (1/60-second) and the iris to maximum width (usually from f/1.4 to f/2).

But when more light is available, the differences kick in. In sports mode, the camcorder will always strive to deliver a fast shutter speed. In medium bright light, it may cut the shutter speed to 1/500-second, while keeping the aperture at its widest setting. A panorama setting will do the opposite—it will always try to use the smallest iris opening (highest f-stop) to deliver the widest possible depth of focus, so that someone standing in front of Mount Rushmore can be in good focus, while the scenic background is in focus, too.

Other programmed auto exposure settings vary the overall exposure level. Examples include the backlighting mode, which increases the overall exposure, letting more light reach the image sensor; and the spotlight mode, which reduces the overall exposure to keep a brightly lit subject in the center from appearing as a saturated blob of white.

In the final analysis, there's nothing the programmed auto exposure can do that you couldn't adjust yourself with a good set of manual override controls. But such manual controls are now usually available on only top-of-the-line camcorders. Hobbyists with modest budgets might find that by studying programmed auto exposure, they can create the same effects just as easily. ■



Programmed Pair: Canon's Hi8 UCS3 (top) and JVC's VHS-C GR-AX75 both offer a wide range of programmed auto exposure modes, all accessed by large dials on the camcorders' left sides.



INFRA-RED
REMOTE WITH
JOG/SHUTTLE

While its HQ circuitry sharpens the picture and its Hi-Fi stereo with Hyper-Bass delivers theater-quality sound, the real beauty of the HR-VP700 lies beneath its elegant, component-grade exterior.

The HR-VP700 makes sure you record the programs you want, when you want them with its unique VCR+ with Cable Box Control. This means it not only programs in the date and time *automatically*, but it can even switch your cable box to the right channel.

Instead of making you sit or scan through hours of video to find what you want to watch, the HR-VP700 has a unique "Video Album Maker" function that lets you pick out exactly the sections you want and dub them to another VCR in any order! Its Jog Shuttle (also on the remote) gives you variable slow motion



SELECT AND ASSEMBLE UP TO 8 SEGMENTS IN ANY ORDER...AUTOMATICALLY!

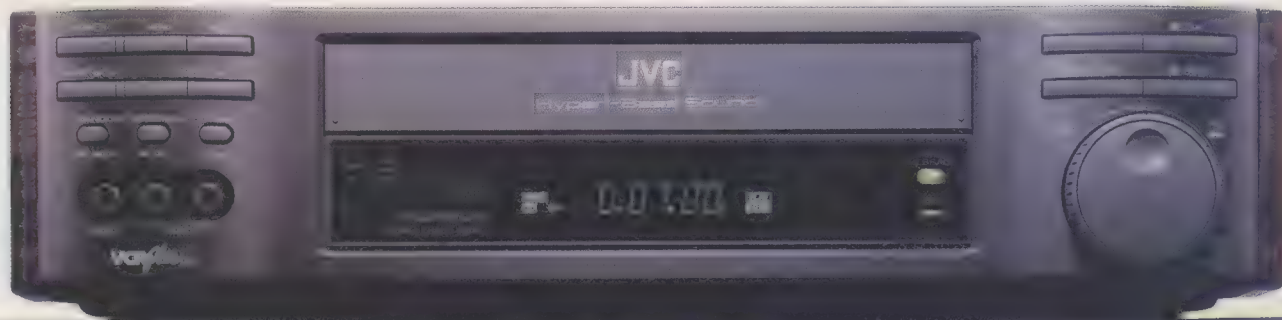
speeds and multiple speed visual search to study or locate segments fast and accurately. Plus, its Flying Erase Head and Zero Frame Editing give your videos that glitch-free, professional look.

Think about it: most high end VCR's brag about *their* enhanced performance; the JVC HR-VP700 enhances *your* performance, too. That's because JVC invented VHS.

JVC®

The Inventor of VHS.

At JVC, higher performance
means more than a better picture.



A new decoding scheme adapts bipolar speakers to home theater

For a young industry, home theater is surprisingly set in its ways. Almost every home theater uses five conventional dynamic (cone) speakers, sometimes with a subwoofer. There's a good reason for this configuration—it's the same one used to mix movie sound. But it's not the only setup worth trying. Indeed, the mediocre music sound produced by many home theater systems has driven us to keep trying new alternatives.

One solution to the movies-versus-music audio dilemma is bipolar dynamic speakers, like those made by Definitive Technology and Mirage. Bipolar speakers fire in two directions, forward and

of the system to take advantage of the bipolar sound.

We've found that a good pair of bipolar speakers, combined with a well-matched center speaker and two bipolar surround speakers, forms a system that works beautifully for both movies and music. The bidirectional dispersion pattern of bipolar speakers fills in some of the sonic gaps between the front speakers. This helps a small, horizontally configured center speaker blend better with the two main speakers. And the pattern also helps the speakers overcome the sonic disadvantage of having a big-screen TV—a formidable sonic obstacle—between them. All in all, bipolar systems are as close as we've come to finding the holy grail of home theater.

Mirage is advancing the state of bipolar home theater by pursuing a radically new idea in surround-sound decoding. As explained to us by Mirage vice-president of engineering Ian Paisley, the system uses two bipolar main speakers, a front-firing center speaker and two surrounds. The most unusual aspect of the system is that the decoder is set for phantom center, so that the main speakers create a strong center image. This solves what Paisley feels is a big problem with home theater. "If you use bipolar speakers, you get this terrific spacious sound," Paisley says. "But a left-center-right pan in a movie soundtrack destroys that sense of space."

The center channel is decoded as a conventional Dolby Pro-Logic center, run at only 10 percent of its normal volume (Paisley recommends a level about 20 decibels lower than the main speakers). Even though the main speakers produce a strong center

image, without a center speaker, off-center viewers would experience a shift of dialog to the side of the screen on which they're seated. The low-level center speaker keeps the dialog tied to center-screen. The advantage of this setup,

even though it doesn't follow Pro-Logic norms, is that it creates a smooth soundstage between the main speakers, which we think sounds more natural than the effect created by three front speakers.

We recently set up a home theater based on Paisley's concept: two Mirage M-5si main speakers, an NHT VT-1c center speaker (Mirage's own center speaker would be a more appropriate choice, but it wasn't yet available) and two NHT HDP-1 surround speakers.

Unfortunately, no surround decoder we know of will decode a center channel in phantom center mode. Until such a product is developed, Paisley suggests running the main speakers with the full stereo signal by bypassing the surround decoder for the main speakers, and using the decoder only for the center and surround speakers.

"Pro-Logic does a lot of processing of the signal," Paisley says. "By running the full-range signal into the main speakers, you eliminate all that, although you do lose some channel separation." To set the center-channel level, Paisley recommends turning the level all the way down, then slowly bringing it up until the center fills in.

We got around the problem by using two decoders—a Fosgate Model Four for the main and surround speakers, and Kenwood's KC-X1 THX decoder for the center. This system was unwieldy, but impressive. Everyone who heard the system liked the sound for both movies and music—and that's a rare occurrence here. To our ears, the best THX speakers still outperform this system on some movies. But for real-world living rooms, a bipolar system is tough to beat.

The difference is especially apparent with music. On "I Always Get My Man," a beautifully recorded performance by Madonna and Mandy Patinkin from the *Dick Tracy* laserdisc, the sonic image of the piano is very convincing, and Madonna's voice is full and clear, without harshness or excessive sibilance. But change to *Under Siege*, and all the explosions and surround-sound effects still sound right.

Rather than accept compromises, home theater engineers should explore ways to make systems that do everything well. Here's hoping other manufacturers follow Mirage's lead. ■



Home Theater's Holy Grail? Mirage's M-5si tower speakers and MC-Si center speaker work well for movies and music.

backward. This configuration gives them a spacious sound. Proponents of bipolar speakers say they more closely approximate the way musical instruments radiate sound. And speaker manufacturers are working on ways to optimize the rest

How to turn an evening at home
into a night at the movies.



A guide to getting full, rich movie theater sound
from a Virtually Invisible® speaker system.

BOSE



Remember when watching a movie was more than a way to pass the time? When it was fun? When it fired your imagination?

That's because the big screen provides a larger-than-life view of the world of make believe. And the true-to-life sound that goes along with the picture is what turns make believe into reality. It turns characters into real people, pulls us into the action, sets the pace, and summons our emotions. And it does it so effectively, we are


transformed from mere observers into participants in the drama that unfolds before us.

Until recently, even though re-creating the excitement of the movie theater at home was possible, it was available to only a few – those who could afford the expensive electronics, those who were not intimidated by the complex components, and those who had enough room to contain it all.

But now, with the availability of affordable, high resolution big screen TV's, hi-fi VCR's and laser disc players,

and advanced speaker technology, the ability to re-create the fascination of the movies – right in our own homes – is well within the grasp of many more families.

Beginning with the following article, written by Tim Holl, Manager of Research Operations at Bose Corporation, this guide describes how you, too, can enjoy the excitement of the movies in your home. □



The most exciting part of your video could be the audio!

By Tim Holl

Excitement.
That's what I

felt when I took home an early laser disc player, hooked it up to my sound system and settled back to watch *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. I was totally absorbed – until I was jarred out of Indiana Jones' world by the sound of his voice somewhere off-screen, when I saw him speaking on-screen. Audio for video clearly wasn't as simple as the "audio only" material I was used to.

Over the years, work on high quality audio for video has been almost

exclusively in movie theater sound – very different from home sound. In the theater, the listening space is larger. More importantly, the larger screen matches the sound stage size exactly. At home, even rear-projection screens provide comparatively small images – much smaller than the audio image delivered by normal stereo systems. So, when you design your home system, you must take care to seamlessly integrate the sound with the small screen video.

But don't be daunted. We'll examine the benefits and drawbacks of various approaches, from the simplest use of a current stereo system, to a full multi-channel system. You'll soon understand home theater's requirements, potential pitfalls, and what's available to build with. And you'll see that it can be done with surprisingly inconspicuous equipment.

The first step is to connect your video sound to your stereo system and place your TV screen midway

between the speakers. This immediately improves the tonal balance and extends the audio image to the width of the space between the speakers.

Although on-screen vocal localization is not as good as with the TV sound, the system is much better than TV alone, particularly on video material with a musical soundtrack.

If your speakers produce deep bass, you'll hear another benefit. Movies

rear. They let you enjoy on-screen vocal localization without sacrificing a wide stereo image. Front channel steering is effective on most material, even if it isn't surround encoded.

In most video material, speech is recorded monophonically for good on-screen localization. A steering logic surround decoder directs the monophonic content of the program to the center channel only. (Surround decoders with-

Place them high on the rear wall where furniture won't interfere between the speakers and the viewer. If deep bass wasn't necessary, any number of speakers would work. But, most surround encoded movies include bass in the surround channel, which must be adequately reproduced by the surround speakers to get the full impact.

If you use a three-piece system with a separate bass enclosure for the rear



Connect the video sound to the stereo system and place the TV between the speakers for improved tonal balance. (Effect illustrated with Bose® Direct/Reflecting® speakers.)



Second, add a steering logic sound decoder and an acoustically matched center channel for on-screen vocal localization.



Third, complete the system with rear channel speakers with deep bass to get the full impact of surround encoded material. (Effect illustrated with Bose Direct/Reflecting® speakers.)

often use bass to provide clues to the overall atmosphere of scenes. A deep, continuous bass note imparts danger, such as when enemy spaceships come into view. Without good bass performance, loudspeakers literally don't produce these notes – and the effect is totally lost.

The second step is to improve vocal localization. On TV much of the sound is speech, which we expect to be localized on the screen. However, the phantom center image produced by wide-spaced speakers doesn't provide on-screen localization.

Turning up the TV's volume a bit can help. A better solution is to move your stereo speakers next to either side of the screen. (They must be magnetically shielded so they don't interfere with the picture.) This narrows the sound stage, but provides high quality sound with excellent on-screen vocal localization.

Slightly more complex audio-video systems include a steering logic surround decoder. They can provide many benefits, even if you do not intend to use a surround channel in the

out steering logic don't provide this benefit. Even if they have a center channel, they feed monophonic signals equally to the right and left channels.)

Now you need a center channel loudspeaker on top of or adjacent to

channel, be sure you put the bass unit well away from the speakers reproducing bass for the front channel. If the two bass units are too close together, the time delay in your surround decoder will cause the bass notes from

The system will be much better than the TV alone, particularly on video material with a musical soundtrack.

the TV. It must be magnetically shielded; but, since its purpose is to localize speech, it does not have to produce deep bass.

Finally, a complete audio-video system should include rear channel speakers. And, since there are now several speakers in the room, it's a good idea to select inconspicuous models.

front and rear to interfere with each other and produce severe and unwanted effects known as comb filtering.

In a full surround system, the rear effects are only correctly reproduced on surround encoded material. However, the left-right-center steering produced by the decoder will be effective on most material, encoded or not.

So it is a good idea to switch the rear speakers off for non-encoded material but to leave the decoder active. You'll still get excellent on-screen localization, even on the non surround-encoded material, but arbitrary rear sounds will not detract from your enjoyment.

Whether you build your home theater system all at once, or one step at a time, always build with an overall plan in mind.

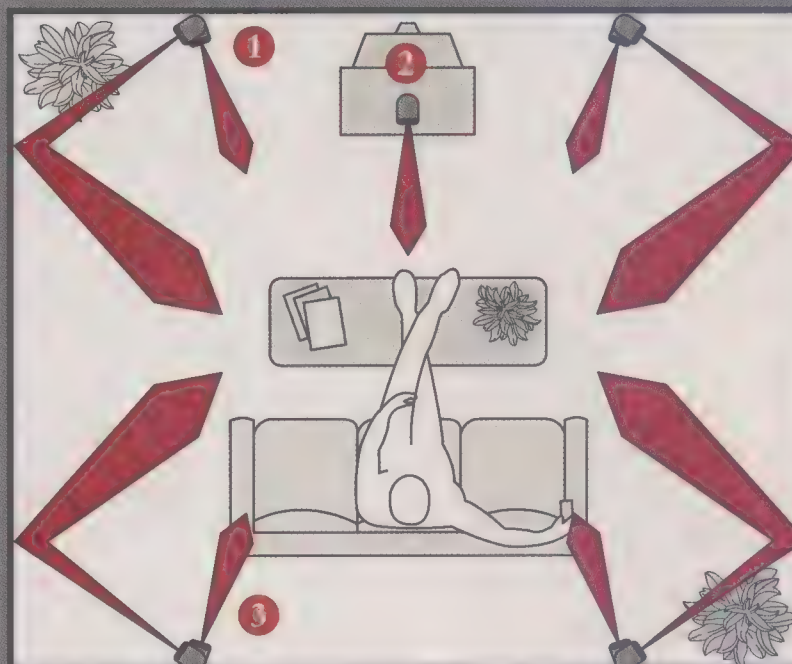
- To maintain a consistent tonal quality as the sound moves from channel to channel, choose front, center, and rear channel speakers that are as acoustically matched as possible.

As *Stereo Review* said, "If the center speaker doesn't match the sound of the left and right front speakers, imaging and clarity will be impaired."

- To capture all the impact of today's sound tracks, choose front and rear speakers with full range response and wide dynamic range.
- Be sure the radiation pattern of the front and rear speakers provides a wide sound stage. This is important in reproducing the fullness of musical scores and the ambient sound accompanying large visual fields.
- Remember, in most cases, more than one person will be watching. This will put viewers at different angles and distances from the speakers. When you audition speakers, listen to a movie sound track from several locations to be sure you can hear all the channels at each location.
- And, finally, make sure the sound system you select will fit into your room with enough space to allow comfortable viewing.

Choosing a system that meets all these criteria can be daunting. But recent breakthroughs in sound reproduction technology, combined with proven speaker design, now makes selecting a home theater sound system easy. Once you take that first step, you may wonder how you put up with ordinary TV sound, and find yourself renting those old favorites again to hear what you missed the first time. □

Home Theater Speaker System Placement Using Bose Direct/Reflecting® Speakers.



1. Front Speakers

Should be placed above furniture for a wide, uniform sound stage to allow the fullness of the music and sound effects to reach a variety of listening locations.

2. Center Channel

Should fit on top or just underneath the TV and localize on-screen voices to on-screen action.

3. Rear Speakers

Should have the tonal characteristics of the front speakers, including full bass response and wide dispersion.



With Acoustimass® speaker technology in your home theater system, your eyes won't believe your ears.

Patented Bose® Acoustimass speaker technology delivers sound so clear and lifelike, it can rival the best movie theaters. When the first Acoustimass speaker was introduced, *Stereo Review* said "...side by side with speakers costing three to five times as much, the AM-5 (Acoustimass-5) consistently produced the more exciting and listenable sound..."

The part you see.

While Acoustimass technology puts you in the center of the action by enveloping you with sound, that doesn't mean you're surrounded by bulky equipment. The Virtually Invisible® speaker design takes care of that with speakers so small they fit in the palm of your hand and a bass module you can slip behind or under furniture.

All you see is the Virtually Invisible® speaker arrays. Their surprising size is made possible by the extended range

of the hidden Acoustimass bass module. You'll think all the sound is coming from the arrays, including the bass. And each array can be rotated to reflect a portion of the sound off the walls of the room to help re-create the spaciousness of a movie theater and a uniform sound field throughout the listening area.

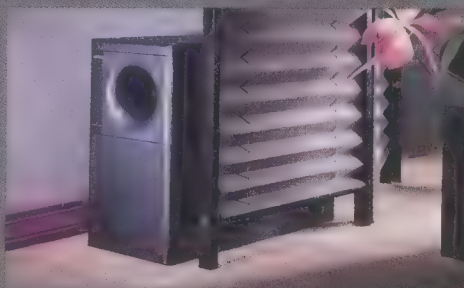
As *Stereo Review* said "...its powerful, room-filling sound emerges from satellite speakers which could easily be held on the palm of one's hand..." Each no taller than a video tape, they can be placed conveniently on a shelf or mounted on a wall or ceiling with optional mounting brackets. (Floor stands are also available.)

The part you don't see.

What you don't see is the hideaway Acoustimass bass module. Its patented technology was developed by Bose to radiate sound directly into the room via an air mass rather than a vibrating cone. The result is a deep, pure bass response with no audible distortion.

The Acoustimass bass module is designed to produce bass so efficiently that a conventional bass system would need four times the size to deliver the same bass response. The result is a bass module small enough to hide behind a curtain or under a chair. And because the module produces no audible distortion to give away its location, it can be placed almost anywhere in the room.

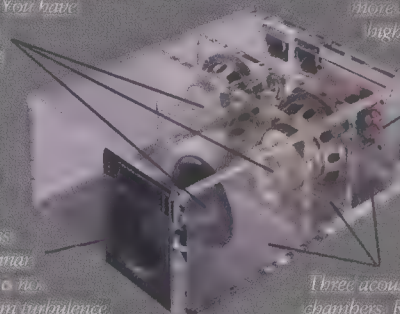
Acoustimass Speaker Technology



You can hide an Acoustimass bass module nearly anywhere in the room. All the music, even the lowest bass notes, appears to come from the tiny cube speakers, regardless of where the bass module is hidden.

Three acoustic masses provide 36dB/octave acoustic crossover rolloff. You have complete freedom to hide the bass module anywhere in the room.

Elliptical toroid conduit for the radiating air mass provides for laminar airflow so there is no audible noise from turbulence, even at high loudness levels.



System protection circuit for more system protection at high output volumes and increased reliability.

Three acoustic compression chambers. Reduced cone motion eliminates audible distortion.



Build your home theater speaker system in one or two easy steps.



Acoustimass-7 home theater speaker system.

Acoustimass® systems are available with either two or three cube speakers, each precisely matched in sound quality. So you can buy your entire system now, or just the front channel system now and rear channels later. Either way, you're assured of complete compatibility because each system is acoustically matched to the other.

By combining acoustically matched systems, you can create a complete five-speaker system that takes less space than many televisions, yet sounds like many of the best movie theaters.

Acoustimass-7 home theater speaker system.

The solution for lifelike, movie-sized sound from a Virtually Invisible® speaker system, these three tiny front speaker arrays deliver lifelike, spacious sound. Hidden anywhere you like is the compact bass module. Yet all the sound appears to come from the arrays.

With its Bose® Direct/Reflecting® speaker design, this system re-creates a natural balance of reflected and direct sound that conventional speakers cannot



match. By swiveling the top cube of each speaker, you can tailor the mid- and high-frequency pattern to your preference. Magnetic shielding inside the arrays allows you to place the center channel speaker on or near your TV, to accurately position on-stage dialogue.

Add the acoustically matched Acoustimass-5 speakers for a five-



Acoustimass-4 home theater speaker system.

speaker system with total sound quality consistency. Every seat in the house becomes the best seat in the house.

Acoustimass-4 home theater speaker system.

The solution for big screen sound from an even more compact and affordable system, the Bose Acoustimass-4 speaker system shares much of the technology of the Acoustimass-7 system. Yet its smaller cube speakers and even more compact bass module make its big screen sound fit into the smallest screening areas. And it won't crowd your budget.

Engineered to take full advantage of Acoustimass speaker technology, the Acoustimass-4 system features three tiny, magnetically shielded cube speakers. Each is less than 4 inches high, yet together they fill the room with clear mid- to high-frequency sound. From the center channel, you hear crisp dialogue. Left and right channel speakers project their wide stereo image far beyond the limits of your screen. Hidden from sight, the bass module establishes the lows that set the mood.

For a five speaker system, add the acoustically matched Acoustimass-3 speaker system for the rear channel.

Check your local newspaper for special offers.

Then go look. And listen. You'll find there's an Acoustimass home theater speaker system to fit your needs and your budget. Or call us toll free for more information and the names of authorized dealers.

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**Home
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Made
Easy**
Acoustimass Systems

*"In fact, the more I use Acoustimass speakers,
the more amazed I am."*

Julian Hirsch, Stereo Review

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Three-hour tapes and broken leaders

Q A business associate just returned from Japan and brought back a couple of three-hour 8mm videotapes. When will we be able to buy these extra-long tapes in the U.S.? The extra time would be useful for recording football games and other long events.

Jim Sloan
New York, New York

A Boy, what timing! As it happens, Sony just announced a new three-hour Hi8 tape for sale in the U.S. It's been available in Japan since spring. How much did your friend pay for his? A lot, I'll bet, since the list price on the new E6-180 is \$34.95. Ouch!

This new metal evaporated tape is only seven microns thick, compared with nine and 10 microns for 150- and 120-minute tapes, respectively. The ME coating on the tape is the same—only about half a micron thick, or one sixth the thickness of metal particle tapes. Thus, the new tapes are just as sturdy as the thicker tapes. They also use a new PET (polyethylene-terephthalate) in the plastic base film.

While the new tape delivers three hours for NTSC users, it delivers only 128 minutes in the PAL format, which runs at a slightly faster speed.

Q I have about half a dozen VHS tapes on which the plastic tape leader has snapped right off the take-up reel. Most of the leader stays connected to the tape, but the break is inside the shell, making it difficult to fix. Most of these tapes are a few years old, so I'm wondering if there's a problem with the tape or the leader. Are older tapes more vulnerable to snapping the leader like this?

Stuart Trimble
Hollywood, California

A I have a few tapes like this myself, and I think your theory holds water—the older the tape, the greater the risk the leader will snap. Of course, if you rewind your tapes in one of those cheap dime-store rewinders that brake abruptly when the reels can't revolve anymore, then you're asking for trouble.

Tapes rewound in a quality VCR generally won't snap the leader like this, since the rewind is controlled by a photosensor and a microprocessor that de-

tect the clear leader and stop the rewind cycle before the leader is overstressed. Some newer full-load VCRs are even more sophisticated, measuring the control track pulses on the tape to figure out exactly how full or empty the tape pack is, automatically slowing the rewind speed as the tape nears the end.

Still, the plastic leader on some brands of tape does tend to get brittle with age, a problem that is probably made worse by air pollution, which is known to "eat" the rubber belts and rollers in a VCR as well. Fixing a snapped leader is tedious, but it can be done, although it isn't worth the effort unless the program on the tape outweighs the inconvenience of having to take the shell apart and reattach the leader.

Q Occasionally, when listening to a network newscasts, I hear little beeps going off in the background. Do you know what these are?

D. Smith
Kansas City, Kansas

A TV newsrooms, like almost every office in the country, have embraced desktop computer terminals. They use them to write and update their news copy, and to feed it to the anchors. Specially written computer software that combines database functions with word processing capabilities is used. During fast-breaking news stories, updated information needs to be brought to the attention of the anchor. When this happens, a short beep is emitted by the terminal, which sometimes ends up being heard over the air.

Q Where can I find some more of those little plastic boxes that come with 8mm videocassettes? I have about half a dozen tapes with broken boxes, and I'd like to give them new homes.

Larry Fowler
Santa Monica, California

A Lots of companies now make these little "jewel box" cases, as well as slipcases similar to what Fuji is now providing with its 8mm cassettes. One supplier is Reliance Plastics (201-473-7200) in Passaic, New Jersey.

continued on page 58

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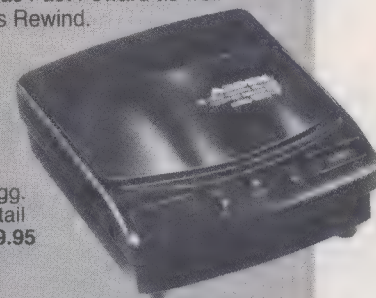
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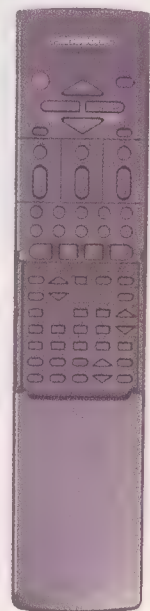
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VIDEOTESTS



Screen Saver:

To help prevent screen burn-in, Panasonic's PT-50WXF5 frames 4:3 video with bright gray bars at the sides, rather than the black bars used by other 16:9 sets.



VIDEOTEST
705

PANASONIC 50-inch 16:9 TV

The biggest difference between the PT-50WXF5 and other 16:9 sets is that it frames 4:3 pictures with light gray bars at the sides, instead of the black bars used by other manufacturers. We sus-

Panasonic's PT-50WXF5 is one of the first 16:9 rear-projection TVs to reach the U.S. All the 16:9 sets introduced so far differ in ways that are at first glance subtle, but which extended viewing reveals can make a big difference.

Panasonic PT-50WXF5 16:9 TV

Price: \$5,500

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 247 lbs., 48.9 x 52.2 x 21.6 inches

Screen Size: 50 inches diagonally

Speaker Size: 2 10cm woofers, 2 7x4cm oval tweeters

Type of Tuning: frequency synthesis, dual tuners

Method of Tuning: programable scan on set, scan plus direct access on remote

Broadcast Tuning Range: 2 to 13, 14 to 69

Cable Tuning Range: 125 channels

Remote Control: IR wireless with exposed up/down rockers for volume, channel and favorite channel; exposed buttons for power, multi, directional cursors, TV/video, ac-

tion (menu), mute, rapid tune (last channel), skip, 10 digits, rewind/search, stop, play and fast forward/search; concealed buttons for VCR—power, TV/VCR, up and down channel, record, pause and frame advance; cable box—power, up and down channel, and TV—100, norm, recall, sleep, A/C, antenna, closed caption, superimpose, standard size, full, zoom, cinema, freeze, search, picture swap, PIP/POP, channel up and down, TV/video, size, video menu

and audio menu

Inputs: front—S-video/video/stereo audio; rear—2 S-video/video/stereo audio, 2 RF, terminals for using internal speakers as center channel

Outputs: front—headphones; rear—video program out, fixed- and variable-level stereo audio, RF loop-through for cable box

Internal Audio Amplifier Power: 15 watts/channel plus 15 watts for subwoofer

pect Panasonic did this to avoid "burn-in" of the black bars, an effect that could occur (theoretically, at least) with extended viewing of 4:3 pictures. How the gray bars compare to black bars esthetically is a matter of personal opinion, but we found them distracting.

The set offers several modes to accommodate pictures of different aspect ratios. The most useful mode is called cinema. It fills the screen horizontally, and cuts off the excess at the top and bottom. This mode is intended for letterboxed movies. Movies in the 1.85:1 aspect ratio fill the screen perfectly in cinema mode. Movies with wider aspect ratios will still have black bars top and bottom.

There are two other modes. The full mode stretches a 4:3 picture horizontally

continued on page 52

HIGHLIGHTS

Panasonic's PT-50W XF5R shares the picture expansion options of other 16:9 sets. The difference is it frames 4:3 pictures with gray bars instead of black. It can also superimpose onto the film area subtitles that are set into letterbox bars. The set has dual-tuner picture-in-picture and picture-outside-picture, adjustable color temperatures, and a speaker input for Dolby Pro-Logic receivers. Picture quality is very good and audio is good to very good. Ease of use is also very good, and we rate the set very good overall. We recommend that you check it out if you can afford the \$5,550 price.

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 750 lines

Video S/N (dB): video—54.7, chroma AM—62.2, chroma PM—62.3

Screen Brightness: 78 footlamberts

Color Temperature: cool—17,000 Kelvins, standard—13,500 Kelvins, warm—10,000 Kelvins

Accuracy of Colors: very good

Audio Frequency Response: 20 Hz-10 kHz, +1-3 dB, -9 dB at 20 kHz

Audio S/N: 67.25

Total Harmonic Distortion: 0.9

RATINGS

Picture: very good

Audio: good/very good

Ease of Use: very good

Overall: very good

VIDEOTEST
706

TOSHIBA
VHS
VCR

alone remote. This way, you can record scrambled cable channels as long as your TV listings carry VCR Plus codes. (For more on cable box control, see "Cable-Ready VCRs," Oct. '93.)

To control a cable box, the VCR uses an infrared emitter on the top left side near the front. The box must be placed on top of the VCR. Positioning it so the emitter controls it reliably involves trial and error, but with most cable boxes, positioning isn't all that critical. We suggest putting double-stick tape between the feet of the box and the VCR top to prevent accidental movement. If your cable channels differ from those in the listings, you will have to adjust the VCR to compensate. A special menu makes this easy.

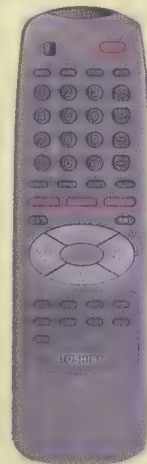
Some manufacturers, like Sony, Fisher and JVC, provide wired emitters that let you place your cable box at a distance from the VCR. This has advantages over a top- or front-firing integral emitter. But if you don't mind putting your cable box on top of the M-659, Toshiba's system works just fine.

The M-659 is a midpriced deck ideal for home theater. It offers a few unusual convenience features, like double-speed play with sound. The sound is speeded

HIGHLIGHTS

Toshiba's M-659 is a prime example of a midline VCR circa

1993—a VHS hi-fi deck with VCR Plus and cable box control. An upward-firing infrared emitter controls the cable box, so you have to set the box on top of the VCR. This center-loading deck includes a remote that can run several brands of TVs, and has index search, auto repeat and double play speed with sound. The VCR is ideal for home theater, but has no editing features. Picture and audio quality are good, and overall performance is good to very good.



up, a la Alvin and the Chipmunks. You may find this helps you search through a tape, or you may find it annoying. It has 1/7x and 1/15x slow motion, both of which are accessed by a button on the remote. It automatically switches from SP to EP to make a timed recording fit on a selected tape length. It can repeat an entire tape up to 10 times. A frame advance button on the remote lets you step forward frame-by-frame, but it won't let you step backward.

This is no editing deck—it lacks a flying erase head, audio dub, video dub, jog/shuttle control and an edit control jack. Camcorder enthusiasts should probably spend an extra \$100 or so for a deck with some of these features.

The M-659 has one of the simplest front panels we've seen. It has only eight buttons, which control power, tape transport and the channel. Video/stereo audio inputs are on the left. Connecting a source to the front inputs automatically switches off the rear inputs. The cassette hatch occupies the center, a configuration said to minimize vibration and jitter. The rear panel has the usual

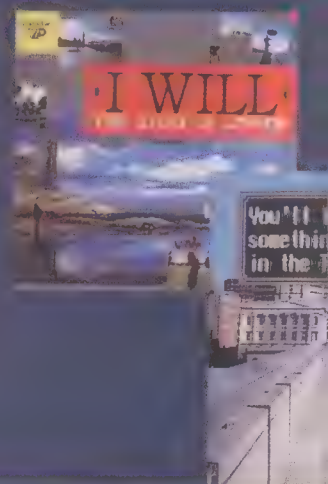
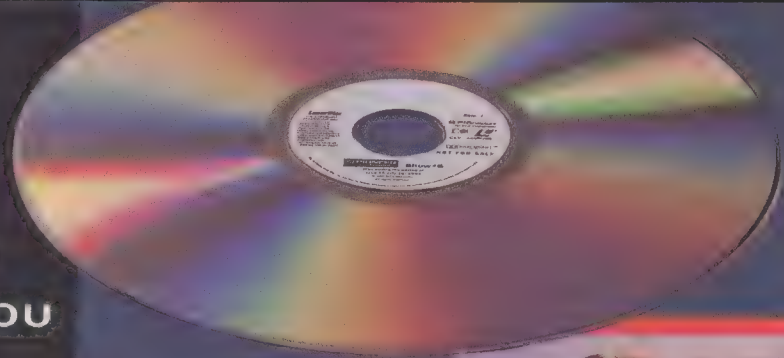
continued on page 128



Standard Feature: The M-659 has VCR Plus with cable box control, 1993's most popular VCR feature.

**WHAT DO YOU CALL A
MACHINE THAT LETS YOU
PLAY MUSIC, GAMES,
KARAOKE, INTERACTIVE
SOFTWARE AND OVER
7,500 MOVIES WITH THE
HIGHEST-QUALITY
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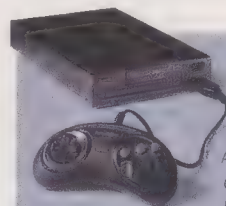
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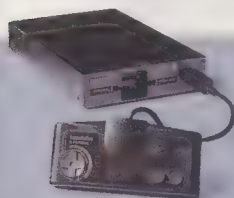


worth of software free.* So you'll already have a head start when it comes to starting your own library.

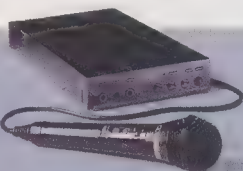
There's a wide variety of titles already out, with more coming. From mind-bending video games and interac-

tive movies to educational discs your whole family is sure to enjoy. Each offers the superior picture and sound you've come to expect from LaserDisc, combined with the powerful punch of interactivity. LaserActive, no one else

can even step into the ring with us. For more information, or your nearest dealer, call 1-800-PIONEER, ext. 310.



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③ ← ④ ← ⑤

ONE MACHINE. INFINITE POSSIBILITIES.

VIDEOTESTS



A New ViewCam:
Sharp's VL-E30U
(above), its A/V adapter
(upper right) and trans-
port mechanism (right).

VIDEOTEST
707

SHARP 8mm camcorder

Sharp's unique, innovative ViewCam, the \$2,199 Hi8 VL-HL100U ("Videotests," May '93), has been so successful the company has introduced two lower-priced 8mm versions. Like the original, the \$1,799 VL-L40U has a four-inch color LCD screen, plus digital effects, an electronic image stabilizer and stereo sound. The \$1,199 VL-E30U reviewed

here has a three-inch color LCD screen and mono sound, but lacks the image stabilizer and the digital effects.

The basic ViewCam design starts with a Hi8 or 8mm VCR built into the back of a small LCD monitor. A grip attaches to the VCR/monitor section with a swivel mechanism. The grip has a small video camera on top. The camera swivels through 270 degrees in the vertical plane. You can even turn the camera all the way around so you can shoot yourself. The camcorder can be set to

continued on page 54

Sharp VL-E30U 8mm Viewcam

Price: \$1,199

Weight & Size (h/w/d):
1.9 lbs. without battery
or cassette; 4-7/8 x



7-7/8 x 3 inches

Image Sensor: 1/4-inch
CCD, 270,000 gross
pixels

Lens: f/1.8, 8x (4.5-85
mm) power zoom

Filter Diameter: 37mm

**Minimum Focusing
Distance:** 1/2 inch in
wide-angle

Autofocus: TTL with
auto macro

Iris: neuro auto expo-
sure with five
programmed AE modes

Shutter Speeds (sec.):
1/60 (normal), 1/500
(sports mode)

White Balance: auto
with lock (twilight
mode)

Viewfinder: three-inch
color LCD with on-
screen indicators for

low light, recording
mode, date/time, vol-
ume, zoom, tape
warnings, clogged
heads, A/V in, edit,
large character warning
displays, low battery,
dew, tape counter/mem-
ory, error, transport
mode, scene menu, AE
mode, focus

Microphone: mono
electret condenser

Jacks: camcorder—ear-
phone, external mic;
A/V pack—video in/out,
DC out for RFU, audio
in/out, monitor in

Tape Speed: SP

Video Heads: 2

Edit Search: forward
1x, reverse 3x

Cue & Review Search:
7x

Fast Forward/Rewind

Time: 6-1/4 min. for
120-min. tape

Remote Pause: only
through remote

**Program Start Loca-
tor/Index/Cue:** index to
start of last recorded
scene if cassette wasn't
ejected

Audio: hi-fi AFM mono

Titles/Graphics: recor-
dable date/time

Special Features: LCD
screen, 270-degree
camera/display rotation
with image invert, five
auto-exposure modes,
still frame, insert edit,
16:9 widescreen mode,
auto head cleaner, fly-
ing erase head

Absent Features:
frame advance, slow
motion, speed play,
auto rewind, manual

HIGHLIGHTS

Six months ago,
Sharp's original
VL-HL100U Hi8

ViewCam set the

video world on fire with its unique design and impressive sales figures. Sharp's new ViewCam, the 8mm VL-E30U, uses a smaller, three-inch LCD monitor as its viewfinder. This lets you shoot tapes and play them back immediately for all to see. With an optional tuner, it can be used as a portable TV. Picture quality is good, audio is average to good and ease of use is very good, for an overall good to very good rating. At \$1,199, it's attractively priced. Our only reservation is that it's difficult to hold steady.

iris, manual shutter
speed, stereo audio,
fader, LANC jack

12 dB at 50 Hz

Hi-Fi Dynamic Range:
68.3 dB

**Total Harmonic Distor-
tion:** 0.4%

Battery Life: 47 min.
(man. focus, no zoom)

RATINGS

Picture: good

Audio: average/good

Ease of Use: very
good

Overall: good/very
good

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution:
250 lines VCR, 300
lines LCD screen

S/N Ratios (dB): un-
weighted video—42.3,
weighted video—47.1,
chroma AM—42.9,
chroma PM—38.1

Minimum Illumination:
13 lux for 50 IRE

**Audio Frequency Re-
sponse:** 150 Hz-20
kHz, +1.9/-3 dB, down

The only way we could make home theater sound any better was to lower the price of admission.

There was a time when you had to be made of money to put together your very own home theater system.

Fortunately Yamaha's affordable new RX-V470 A/V receiver has changed all that.

It's the only receiver priced under \$500 that combines Yamaha Cinema DSP, digitally processed Dolby Pro Logic® and equal power in the right, left and center channels (a powerful 50 watts each). The only one.

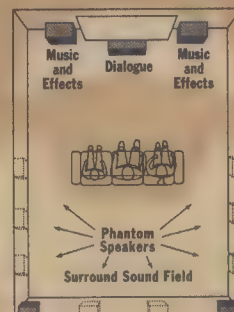


Cinema DSP, as you probably recall, is a remarkable advance that combines two of the most exciting developments to come down the audio turnpike in quite some time.

Yamaha Digital Sound Field Processing (DSP), a unique technology which recreates the actual acoustics of some of the most famous performance venues right in your home.

And Dolby Pro Logic, which places movie dialogue and sound effects around the room, precisely as the director intended.

When combined, these two technologies create "phantom" surround speakers that allow sound to travel beyond the normal range of your actual surround speakers. Something which expands your room's sound field to recreate the bigger-than-life acoustical experience of a modern-day movie theater.



In short, Cinema DSP stands everything else on its ears. And until now, it's something you could only expect to find on Yamaha's more expensive A/V receivers and amplifiers.

Yamaha's impressive new RX-V470. You'll be hardpressed to find an A/V receiver that gives you as much bang for your buck.

Or even as much crash and kaboom, for that matter. **YAMAHA®**

Yamaha's exclusive Cinema DSP fills every nook and cranny.

For the dealer nearest you, call 1-800-4YAMAHA today.

VIDEOTESTS



Technology Trio: Canon's UCS5 (left), its power switch and zoom lever (above) and the liquid-filled prism used in its optical image stabilizer (right).

VIDEOTEST
708

CANON Hi8 camcorder

the first of what Canon calls the second generation of optical stabilizers, with im-

The UCS5 is the latest of Canon's vertically oriented UC-series camcorders, and the first Canon camcorder with an integral optical image stabilizer. (The Canon L1 has an optional lens with its own stabilizer.) This stabilizer is also

proved performance compared to the stabilizer in Sony's Hi8 CCD-TR101.

This stabilizer uses different piezoelectric vibration sensors and a computer-controlled compensation algorithm to respond to a wider range of movement. It is optimized to reduce shake by 90 percent for vibration with rates between 3.5 Hertz (typical of a human hand) and 15 Hz (typical shake in a moving car). It's effective at shake rates up to 20 Hz, but to a lesser degree.

Optical image stabilizers work by means of a liquid-filled prism that refracts light so that the image remains

continued on page 138

Canon UCS5 Hi8 Camcorder



Price: \$1,599

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 1.8 lbs. without cassette or battery, 5-5/8 x 2-7/8 x 5-1/4 inches

Image Sensor: 1/3-inch CCD, 410,000 gross pixels

Lens: f/1.8, 12x (6.1-73.2mm) two-speed power zoom and digital zoom to 24x

Filter Diameter: 46mm

Minimum Focusing Distance: 0.4 inches

Autofocus: TTL with auto macro

Iris: six programmed AE modes with BLC in auto position

Auto Fade: switchable

trigger/hold-down type

Shutter Speeds (sec.): 1/60 (normal), 1/100, 1/250, 1/500, 1/1,000, 1/2,000, 1/4,000, 1/10,000; all available only in auto modes

Viewfinder: 1/2-inch CRT with diopter and onscreen indicators for AF, stabilizer, Hi8, transport mode, wide/tele scale, BLC, 16:9, 10 sec. recording reminder, counter, AE mode, lens cover, tape end, WB lock, battery, tally lamp off, dew, IR sensor off, trigger fade, wind screen, mic pattern, time, date

Microphone: stereo electret condenser with

narrow/wide/zoom pattern and wind noise switch

Jacks: external mic, headphones, LANC, S-video/video/stereo audio in/out, DC out for RF converter

Tape Speed: SP

Video Heads: 4

Cue & Review Search: 9x forward, 7x reverse

High-Speed Search: 15x forward/reverse

Remote Pause: LANC

Audio: hi-fi AFM stereo

Special Features: six programmed AE modes, 24x digital zoom, 16:9 widescreen mode, edit search,

HIGHLIGHTS

When Canon and Sony introduced optical image stabilization last year, they set a new standard of performance. Canon's UCS5 represents the second generation of this technology, with a stabilizer that responds to a wider range of movement, and that's built into the camcorder. The UCS5 offers six programmed auto exposure modes, a 12x optical zoom with a 2x digital doubler, and a 16:9 widescreen mode. Picture and audio quality are both very good, ease of use is very good to excellent and our overall rating is very good to excellent. At \$1,599, it's reasonably priced for a Hi8 camcorder.

switchable IR sensor and tally light, blank tape search, edit erase, still frame, insert edit, flying erase head

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 370 lines Hi8, 250 lines 8mm

S/N Ratios (dB): unweighted luminance—45.2, weighted luminance—50.1, unweighted video—41.4, weighted video—49, chroma AM—40.4, chroma PM—36.5

Minimum Illumination: 9.8 lux for 50 IRE

Audio Frequency Response: 20 Hz-20 kHz, +0/-3.7 dB

Hi-Fi Dynamic Range: 72.3 dB

Audio Distortion: 0.4%
Battery Life: 54 min. (man. focus, no zoom, stab. off)

RATINGS

Picture: very good

Audio: very good

Ease of Use: very good/excellent

Overall: very good/excellent



SONY

IT'S NOT JUST A CAMCORDER.



IT'S YOUR LIFE.

All the color. All the action. All the sounds of life. This is the moment and you want to seize it, save it and capture it forever. You may be a still photographer looking for the next step in visual expression. Or you may be looking to save your never-to-be-repeated life experiences in the best possible way. Either way, you're considering a camcorder — and a range of features and formats.

There is VHS, a format designed in the mid-70's for home VCRs. But for camcorders there's another choice. A better choice. One specifically designed to be smaller, lighter and more portable. One that represents more than a decade of advances in high-density magnetics, mechanics

and tape technology. It's a choice created by a community of 128 companies in electronics, cameras and recording tape. It's the Hi8™* extension to the 8mm video format. And it lets you re-live your life more vividly.

Thanks to metal tape and other technical advances, Hi8 video records at 3.6 times the density of VHS. So Hi8 tapes and Hi8 camcorders are considerably smaller — without sacrificing picture quality or recording time. Indeed, horizontal resolution is an impressive 400 lines — better than even television broadcasting. And unlike the 30-minute limit of VHS-C, a Hi8 videocassette lets you record up to 3 hours at standard speed. Finally, every 8mm camcorder uses Audio Frequency Modulation (AFM) recording. While the audio dynamic range of standard VHS and VHS-C is like AM radio, 8mm has more dynamic range than high fidelity music cassettes!

As a result, Sony Hi8 Handycam® camcorders capture life in crisp detail. Brilliant color. And crystalline sound. All of which means that Sony Hi8 video is the best way to save the best times of your life.



Six times as many memories. While a VHS-C cassette can save up to 30 minutes at standard speed, a Hi8 tape can capture up to three full hours! So you won't be running out of tape in the middle of your adventures.



Smaller action pictures
shot on location by
photographer/videographer
John Alexanders using
the Sony CCD-VX3 and
CCD-TR101 Handycam
Camcorders

IT'S A STEADY HAND.

In still photography, a shaky hand means a blurred picture. The solutions are simple: either a tripod or a faster shutter speed. But in video, camera shake is a tougher problem. While small camcorders let you shoot pictures on the run, camera shake causes disturbing



motion on the screen. And it often ruins the intended effect.

There are ways to keep a moving picture camera steady. For instance, movie

crews include crane operators, dolly operators and grips. Unfortunately, a lone videographer can't hope to duplicate that crew. Enter image stabilization. It's a range of technologies that attempt to identify and correct video camcorder shake. And while all image stabilization systems work to some degree, not all are created equal.

Some systems try to detect movement of the subject in the video image instead of the actual shake of the camcorder. While these systems work under average shooting conditions, some of them are fooled when the subject is moving and the camera isn't. Some perform poorly in low light. They can't stabilize low-contrast subjects. And some systems won't work at all when the lens is zooming in or out. Quite simply, these systems are out of action for many "classic" shooting situations: candlelight, fast-paced sports or during a zoom.



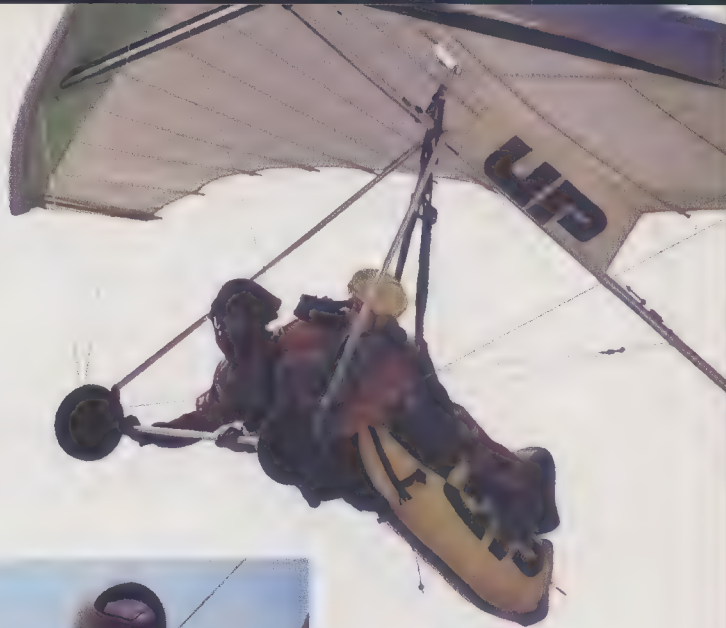
With the Sony SteadyShot system, at right, your audience won't suffer from motion sickness.





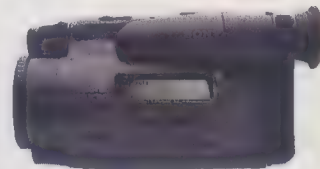
Sony's SteadyShot™ system is different. While other systems must guess about camera shake, ours detects it directly with two motion sensors. In this way, the SteadyShot system works in a wider variety of real-world shooting situations. In candlelight. On low-contrast subjects. When you're shooting a halfback on the run. When you're using the zoom. Whenever you need it, the SteadyShot system is there.

And unlike most other image stabilization camcorders, the Sony CCD-TR101 Handycam camcorder doesn't alter the image size or sacrifice resolution. Critics at *Video Magazine* noticed the difference. When they compared the TR101 against four other image stabilization camcorders, they declared, "Overall, we give the nod to the Sony. It... is the only one of the systems we'd leave on all the time."** So in the on-going battle against camera shake, go with the steadiest hand in the business. Sony's.



Winner of the *Video Magazine* ViVA Gold Award,** winner of a Hands-On Test comparing image stabilization systems, the CCD-TR101 stands apart. Features include 10-bit digital camera signal processing

- 10:1 zoom lens with full range inner focus
- Stereo zoom mic
- Wireless travel remote control



The new CCD-TR500 marries the SteadyShot system to a hyper-precision CCD image sensor. Features include high-resolution advanced color viewfinder with 103,000 pixels • 10:1 zoom lens with full range inner focus • ReadyCharge™ system with lithium ion battery • Wireless travel remote control

IT'S COLOR AND CLARITY.

When you're shooting, your view of the world is only as good as what you see in the viewfinder. And while the view through the typical 35mm SLR camera is

excellent, it does have shortcomings. You simply never know what you've shot until after you've processed the film.

A video viewfinder isn't optical, it's electronic. That means the view isn't simply

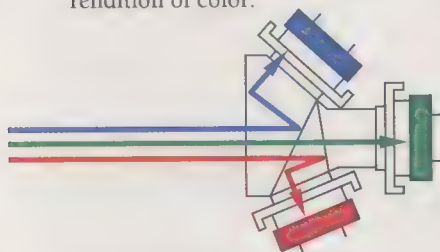
through-the-lens, it's off the sensor, which is the video equivalent of the film plane. So you get complete framing information, plus a good indication of how focus and exposure, backlighting and key lighting will affect your image quality. The electronic viewfinder gives you immediate feedback, for exquisite control of the images you're creating.

Now, for an added level of what-you-see-is-what-you-get videography, Sony has created viewfinders in full color. Incorporated on the CCD-TR500 Hi8 Handycam camcorder as well as the CCD-TR91 standard 8mm model, Sony's color viewfinders keep you on top of the action and help you track moving subjects. And Sony delivers the highest resolution of any consumer color viewfinder, with more pixels (103,000) for more detail. The viewfinder image is twice as large as on our previous models, and Sony's optical filter with special diffraction grating gives you a smoother, more natural image. So if you want a full-color view of the pictures you're taking, you should be looking at the Sony Handycam camcorders.

The viewfinder of the CCD-TR500 Hi8 Handycam camcorder amazes with the brilliant color and high resolution of a 103,000-pixel LCD. Other features include SteadyShot system with hyper-precision CCD image sensor, 10:1 zoom lens with full range inner focus, ReadyCharge™ system with lithium ion battery, Wireless travel remote control.



The quality of Hi8 camcorders stands up to the toughest applications and the most demanding eyes. That's why Sony, an international leader in broadcast video, manufactures an entire line of Hi8 equipment for professionals. What makes a camcorder a true professional? The inclusion of three CCD image sensors instead of just one. Three CCDs mean one each for video's primary colors: red, green and blue. Three CCDs mean three times the pixels for higher resolution. And three CCDs mean far purer, more accurate rendition of color.



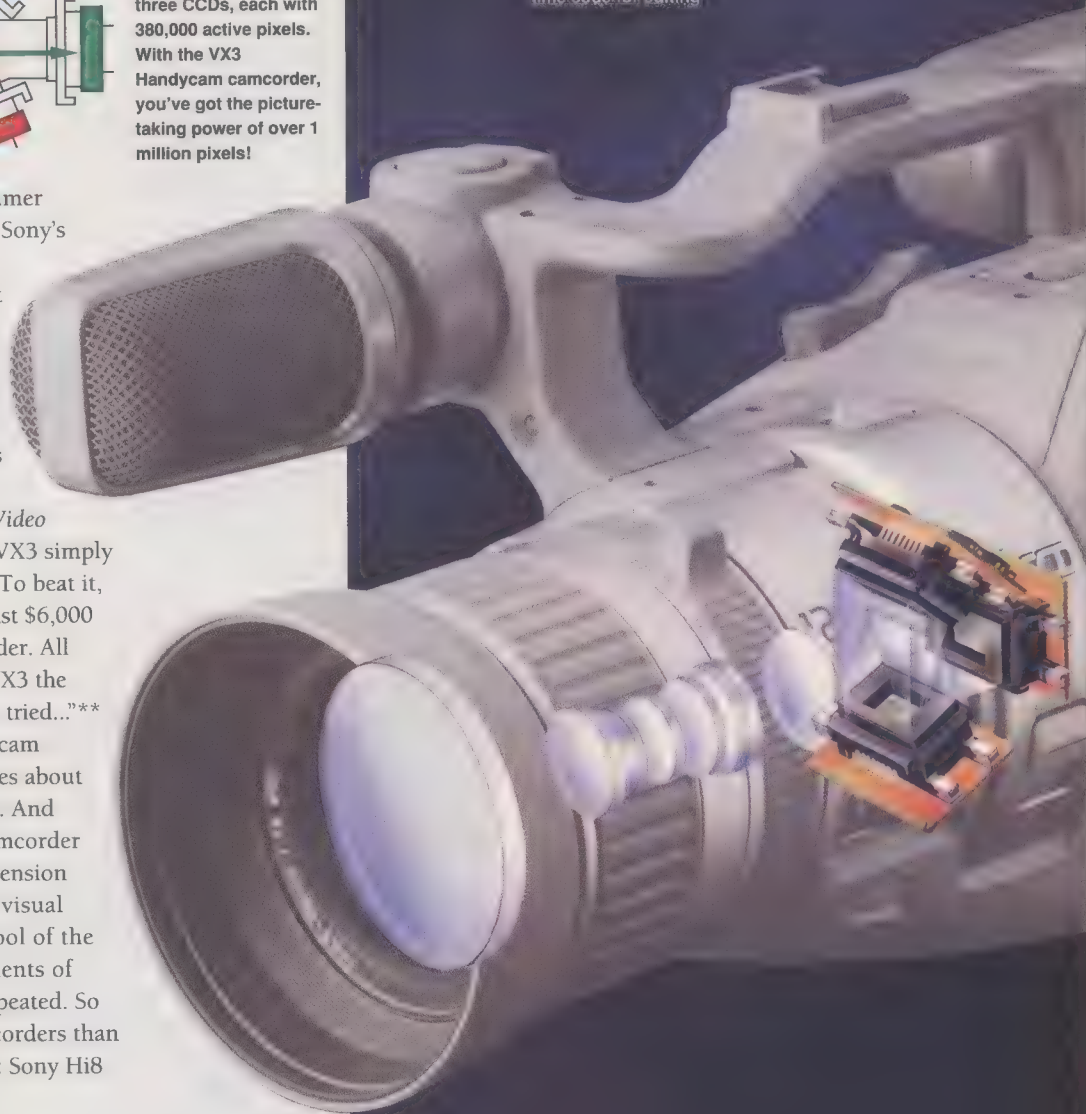
Presenting the first consumer camcorder with 3 CCDs, Sony's incredible CCD-VX3 Handycam camcorder. At 530 lines of camera resolution, the only thing it blurs is the distinction between amateur and professional. The result is a camcorder so good, a panel of reviewers from *Video Magazine* declared, "the VX3 simply trumps the competition. To beat it, you'd have to spend at least \$6,000 for a professional camcorder. All three of us consider the VX3 the best Hi8 camcorder we've tried..."**

The CCD-VX3 Handycam camcorder speaks volumes about the company that built it. And it demonstrates that a camcorder can and should be an extension of your eye. A means of visual expression. A creative tool of the highest order. The moments of your life will never be repeated. So entrust them to the camcorders than have never been equaled: Sony Hi8 Handycam camcorders.



Behold the most advanced optical system Sony has ever built into a consumer product. A newly-developed dichroic prism separates the red, green and blue light and directs it to three CCDs, each with 380,000 active pixels. With the VX3 Handycam camcorder, you've got the picture-taking power of over 1 million pixels!

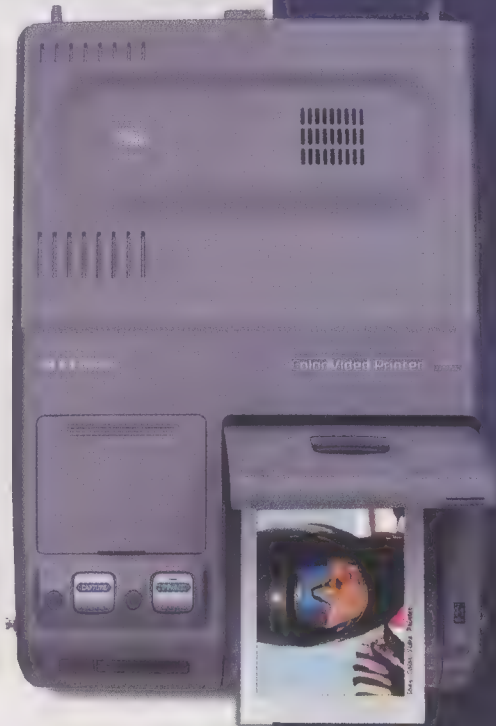
Three CCDs are just the start of the CCD-VX3 story. There's also powerful digital color noise reduction for smoother, cleaner, more consistent pictures. Other features include 12:1 variable speed power zoom lens • Fast full-range inner focus system • Built-in neutral density filter • Extensive manual focus, exposure, shutter and time lapse controls • RC time code for editing



IT'S A TOTAL SYSTEM.

With Hi8 video, your options don't end once your footage is shot. You can print the results for beautiful hard copies that draw from a palette of 16,777,216 colors. You can add special effects. And thanks to Sony's Control-L (LANCS) interface, you can edit with camcorders, home decks and Video Walkman™ TV/VCRs under coordinated control. When you start with Hi8 video, the possibilities are endless.

Dazzling, beautifully-toned color prints can be yours with the CVP-M3 Portable Color Video Printer.



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* Hi8 Interchangeability: Tapes recorded on conventional 8mm video equipment can be played back on video Hi8 camcorders and decks. Tapes recorded on video Hi8 equipment cannot be played back on conventional 8mm video equipment.

** *Video Magazine* quotes: CCD-TR101 SteadyShot quote from the Hands-On Test, April 1993. CCD-TR101 VIVA Gold Award citation: January 1993. CCD-VX3 quotation: March 1993. EV-S3000 quote from another VIVA Gold Award citation: January 1993. All reviews quoted with permission.

For your complete personal guide to all Sony consumer electronics, we're introducing *Sony Style* magazine. To receive your copy for \$4.95, plus \$1.50 shipping and handling, call 1-800-848-SONY. Visa and MC. Offer expires 4/94.

SONY

Sony Electronics Inc.
1 Sony Drive
Park Ridge, New Jersey 07656

You can finally create true professional fades and wipes from one scene to the next, with the XV-D1000 Digital Effects Generator. For advanced post-production, it also includes 2-frame digital memory.

With Hi8 picture quality, Digital Time-Base Corrector and Digital Noise reduction, how good is the Hi8 EV-S3000? *Video Magazine* called it "Easily one of our all-time favorite editing VCRs!"

Protect your Hi8 camcorder from rain, snow, dust and sand with a Sony Sports Pack like the SPK-TR3.

Cover all the angles with Sony VCL Series wide-angle and telephoto lens adaptors.

Play back your movies — or one of 1,800 Hollywood movies — or watch TV on the GV-S50 stereo Video Walkman TV/VCR. You can also use it to edit your camcorder tapes.

Character-generator titles and RC time-code editing are yours with the RM-E700 Editing Controller.

VIDEO SHOWCASE



BOGEN 3169 CINE/VIDEO TRIPOD

THE IDEAL
CAMCORDER
COMPANION

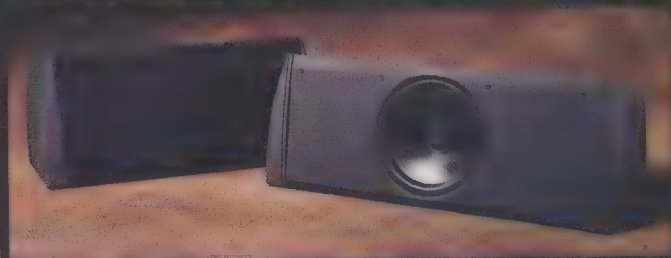
Easy to use and
easy to handle,
the 3169
combines Bogen
3001 Tripod Legs

and a 3130 QR Micro Fluid Head with Quick Release Plate. The Bogen 3001 Tripod is the lightest (about 3 lbs.) and the smallest (folds to 20 1/2 in.), but is one of the most versatile tripods we offer. Sturdy, hard finish aluminum legs feature 3 click stop spread angles and each has a sure grip, quick-acting, non-fouling lever lock. The Bogen 3169 is just one of a wide choice of tripods, fluid heads, dollies and accessories.

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CIRCLE SHOWCASE #4

WIDE TV

continued from page 35

to fill the screen. It's intended for camcorders with 16:9 recording. The zoom mode stretches the picture vertically so that black letterbox bars are eliminated. On 1.85:1 videos, this has the same effect as the cinema mode. On videos with wider aspect ratios, it creates a pleasing, full-screen effect, but cuts off information from the sides. Positioning controls let you choose what part of the picture to crop off.

Letterboxed laserdiscs sometimes have subtitles in the black bar below the picture. On most 16:9 sets, these subtitles would be lost. Panasonic allows you to remove them from the black bar and superimpose them over the picture—a very useful feature for foreign-film fans.

The set also features Panasonic's Active Dome speaker system, which uses a woofer and a tweeter in a ported enclosure that fires from the right and left borders of the picture. This positioning makes the sound seem to come from within the picture. The effect is very realistic. You may also use these well-placed speakers as the center channel of

an external Dolby Pro-Logic system.

Dual tuners let you use the screen's picture-in-picture feature without hooking up a VCR. They also let you access picture-outside-picture, which places a 4:3 picture to the left and three small windows to the right. The small windows let you monitor three other channels. You can listen to the sound from the main picture or the small pictures. You can even listen to the sound from one picture over the main audio system, and the sound from a second picture through the headphone jack.

The tuners are quite versatile, with two types of channel scan: all programmed active channels and a subset of your favorite channels. Each has its own selection rocker. There are also two program timers, so you can program the set to power up on a certain channel at a certain time, and then to switch off whenever you want.

The video control options include noise reduction, cool/standard/warm color temperature and Artificial Intelligence Control (AIC), which uses fuzzy logic to adjust contrast in only selected parts of the picture. There is even an optional matching A/V rack for program sources and processors.

Among the features you might miss are RGB inputs with variable scan rates or provision for upgrading to HDTV—features found on the 16:9 direct-view sets from RCA, ProScan and Philips. There's no internal Dolby Pro-Logic decoder or surround sound system, but they would undoubtedly raise the price of an already expensive piece of equipment. And if you're spending \$5,500 for a TV set, you can certainly afford to spend a little more for a decent surround sound system.

The PT-50WXF5 doesn't look all that different from most rear-projection sets, except that its sides stick out from the pedestal. The front panel carries an extensive set of controls, all hidden behind two flaps. One flap hides a slide switch for south/east-west/north set orientation (this helps correct for any picture discoloration caused by the Earth's magnetic field), and buttons to control the menu system, volume, input selection, channel and aspect ratio mode.

A second compartment has a button that calls up the convergence test crosshair, plus rotary controls for convergence. This is less convenient than having convergence built into the menu system. There's also a headphone jack



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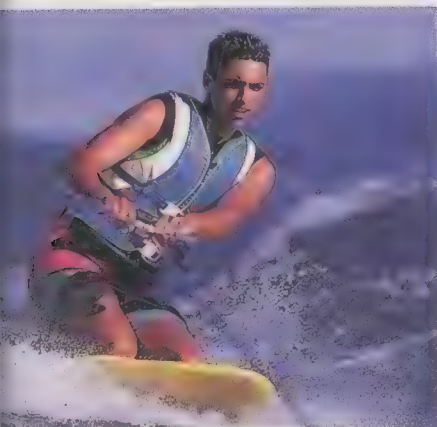
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and an S-video/video/stereo audio input.

The jack panel has two F-connectors for antenna/cable input, and a loop-through output for feeding a cable box. Above those are speaker jacks for using the internal speakers as a center channel. There are also two S-video/video/stereo audio inputs, a video/fixed-level stereo audio output that delivers the same signal being seen on the TV, and a variable-level audio output.

The remote control also operates many brands of VCR and cable box. Setting the remote to control those devices is as simple as holding down the appropriate power button and entering a two-digit code.

The remote offers an unusual feature called multi, which can execute a combination of up to six commands at one push. For example, it can turn on the TV, turn on the VCR, turn on the cable box, switch to video input, set the VCR to play and select PIP.

Near the top are four buttons to control the menu system, plus rockers for volume, channel and favorite channel. There's also a 10-digit keypad and several VCR control buttons. Under a sliding flap are more VCR controls, controls for a cable box, closed captioning and PIP, and dedicated buttons to access each aspect-ratio mode.

There are also buttons that access special video and audio modes. The video modes are standard, daytime (which boosts brightness), evening (which slightly lowers brightness and contrast) and theater (which dims the picture greatly). The audio modes adjust equalization for standard fare, movies, music and speech.

The PT-50WXF5 is no more difficult to hook up than a 4:3 set. The main menu consists of 10 icons: picture, audio, timer, PIP, favorite channel, channel caption lock, positioning, setup and exit. Within the submenus for the icons lie the various adjustments, all of which are fairly easy to operate and self-explanatory. The manual explains most options fully and the only limitation in using all of them is remembering they exist. We rate ease of use very good.

Picture quality is very good overall, exceeded only by the very best rear-projection sets we've tested. However, it's tough to judge such an idiosyncratic set by standard measurements. What it does to the picture is far more important.

Screen brightness is rated at 200 footlamberts, with plus 20 percent peak brightness at center. Unfortunately, there is no standard way of measuring this characteristic. According to our measurements, which are directly comparable to others in "Videotests" over the past two years, brightness is 78 foot-

lamberts at center screen using a 25-percent window pattern.

Color temperature measures a very high 17,000 Kelvins at the cool setting, 13,500 Kelvins at the standard setting, and 10,000 Kelvins at the warm setting. All are way above the 6,500-Kelvin standard for NTSC production. However, at the lower settings, colors still look fairly accurate, and the picture doesn't look as bluish as we expected.

The audio is very good as well. The sound is very pleasing for a rear-projection set, although the bass starts to roll off below 50 Hertz. You'll have to try the center-channel inputs to see if they work well with your system. If the sound of the set's speakers differs greatly from that of your stereo speakers, you're better off using a separate center speaker. But if the timbre match is close enough, using the internal speakers as the center channel will work well because of their nearly perfect placement.

It's tough to rate this set purely on a performance basis—you have to judge its effect on a picture for yourself. The effect on letterboxed laserdiscs (especially those letterboxed to 1.85:1) is truly cinematic; any laserdisc fan is sure to enjoy it. Whether or not that sufficiently offsets the gray bars on the side of 4:3 videos (which for most people represent 90 percent or more of their viewing time) is up to the individual viewer. ■

8MM VIEWCAM

continued from page 38

automatically flip the picture upside down so you can see yourself right-side up in the screen.

The main benefit of this design is that you can see the image as you shoot without having to squint into a viewfinder tube. This is more than a technical advantage—it's a new way to shoot. We found that people took to the original ViewCam like no camcorder before it. This design makes subjects feel more comfortable. It can turn a camcorder-hater into an avid shooter.

There are other advantages as well. First, you can watch your tapes immediately after you shoot them. Second, you don't have to hook a ViewCam up to a TV set for playback, as you do with other 8mm and Hi8 camcorders. Finally, you can use the VL-E30U as an 8mm travel VCR—just use it as the recorder and dub your VHS tapes to 8mm before you leave. It even has a tiny speaker.

The VL-E30U is definitely designed for the point-and-shoot crowd—it has no fader, no titler and no manual controls for iris and shutter speed. It does have five auto-exposure modes: normal,

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sport, snow-sand, twilight and party. All are accessed through a button Sharp labels scene menu. Other features include infrared remote control, an 8x zoom, a flying erase head, full-range autofocus and an automatic head cleaner. There's even a 16:9 widescreen mode that letterboxes the picture with black bars top and bottom.

Sony has just introduced its own version of the ViewCam, the CCD-SC5 Handycam Snap. It costs the same as the VL-E30U. It is smaller than the VL-E30U, and easier to hold steady. However, it has only a fixed-focus lens with normal and 3x telephoto settings—no zoom. (See "New Products" for more info.)

The basic design will be unfamiliar—but instantly comfortable—to camcorder users. There are few controls to worry about. Many functions are controlled by a menu system, accessed by buttons that hide under a hatch on top. Other functions are controlled by buttons that run along the bottom of the screen. These control edit search, auto-exposure mode and manual focus in camera mode, and playback functions in VCR mode.

Buttons for camera start/stop and zoom sit behind the camera, so you can easily hit them with your thumb. There's a sliding lens cover, which we prefer to a lens cap because it can't get in the way when you're shooting.

The only jacks on the VL-E30U are for an earphone and an external mic. Both are important for those who are picky about sound. There are no line-level video and audio jacks on the camcorder, but a row of gold contacts in the battery compartment serves the same purpose. A supplied jack adapter fits between the battery and its contact surface to provide jacks for video and audio input and output, power for an RF adapter and monitor in, which routes an external video signal directly to the display with priority over camera and playback images.

A flap on top provides access to buttons for A/V adjust, up and down. The A/V adjust button cycles through options for backlight normal/high, brightness, color, tint and volume. There are also buttons for menu, select and set, which control minor camera and playback functions. If a menu option is not selected, the select button cycles

through counter options and the set button resets the counter.

Despite its radical design, the VL-E30U should be easy for anyone to operate. It has only one drawback, but it's a major one—this camcorder is difficult to hold steady. We tried holding it several ways, but still couldn't get a steady picture at telephoto settings without propping the camcorder on something solid.

The VL-HL100U is much easier to hold steady because it has loops for a neck strap, and necks tend to be much more stable than arms. And of course, it also has an image stabilizer. Adding a stabilizer to the VL-E30U would have increased the cost considerably, but adding loops for a neck strap would have solved the stability problem without increasing cost significantly.

The autofocus works acceptably—it's not quite as quick or stable as the best we've tried, and it tends to hunt a bit in low light. We'd use it outdoors and in well-lit interiors, but we would switch to manual focus in dimmer indoor scenes. In bright sunlight, the screen can be difficult to see. Sharp offers an optional sun screen that should help. We rate ease of use very good.

Picture quality is good, about on a par with other affordably priced 8mm camcorders, and perhaps even a small cut above. Detail is quite good for 8mm, and the colors are very accurate—a good showing, considering this is the first camcorder in the U.S. with a 1/4-inch CCD sensor.

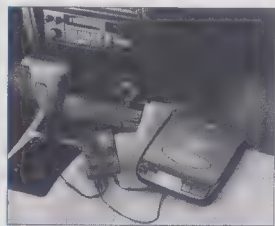
The only significant picture problem we noticed is chroma PM noise, which causes colors (particularly reds) to shift. You'll see chroma PM noise when you shoot solid red or orange objects, and you might notice a little bit of it in flesh-tones shot under in incandescent light. This problem is very common among all consumer video formats, even laserdisc.

Audio quality is average to good, nothing special for an 8mm camcorder. However, the mic jack (a common but unfortunate omission in inexpensive camcorders) lets you hook up a good external mic and dramatically improve the sound. The mic on the camcorder sounds okay, but because it's only about 1/4-inch from the tape drive, a little bit of transport noise leaks in. The integral speaker is good enough to hear what's on the tape, but if you want to watch a movie on the VL-E30U, use headphones.

Overall, we rate the VL-E30U good to very good. If you're looking for a fun, inexpensive 8mm camcorder—and don't mind steadying yourself against a solid object when you shoot telephoto shots—you must see this camcorder before you buy.

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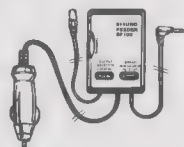
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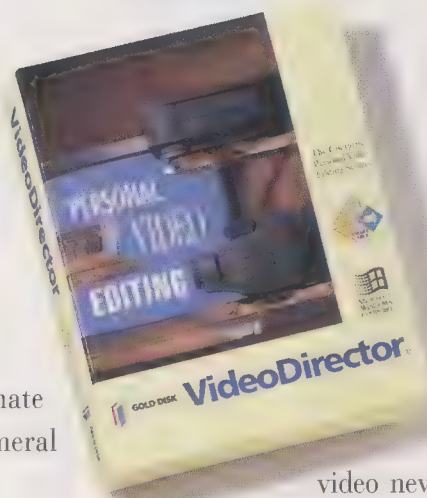
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continued from page 33

Q I have a couple of old black-and-white, half-inch Sony reel-to-reel videotapes on five- and seven-inch reels. I'd like to convert them to VHS. Is there someone who still provides this sort of service? The converted tapes don't have to be broadcast quality, since they will just be used for personal viewing.

John Miller
Manchester, New Hampshire

A This question has cropped up a number of times in the 10 years I've been writing this column and, surprisingly, some of the antique VTRs

needed to accomplish the task are still being coaxed along by companies that specialize in this service.

Two you might consider are: Advanced Video, 6753 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90038, and Video Transfer, Box 801584, Houston, TX 77280. I recommend you test either service by having just one or two reels transferred first (due to age and other mechanical anomalies, many of these old tapes simply refuse to play well enough to be transferred). If you're happy with the quality and the price, then send in the rest. If the original tapes are especially valuable to you, pack them carefully and ship them insured, with a

return receipt requested, so they won't get lost in transit.

Q I've seen ads for a small box that plugs into the lighter socket of a car and delivers AC current to power VCRs, computers, small TVs and just about any AC appliance. Do these things really work, and is the current they supply reliable enough?

Arnold Podgorsky
Cleveland, Ohio

A Well, I bought one, and it certainly does work. I tested mine by running a Magnavox VR9010 VCR, which occupied the passenger seat next to me. The current supplied by the adapter seemed perfectly stable, and the video I recorded (I was testing a dashboard video camera, which had its own power supply) was as good as any I could have made using a standard AC outlet.

The only catch is that you've got to have your car running for the inverter (so-called because it turns direct current into AC) to operate. When you turn the engine off, the inverter ceases to operate. It's not just your car's battery that makes it work, it's the car's alternator, which is powered by the engine. DC-to-AC inverters sell for \$70 to \$100. ■

Video Magazine welcomes your questions. Please include a phone number, but not a return envelope as the volume of mail does not permit replies. All letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address queries to Q & A, Video Magazine, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001.

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HANDS-ON

continued from page 17

Otherwise, the sound is at best okay, even considering the system's low \$950 price. The subwoofers sound surprisingly good, with full, punchy bass down to about 28 Hertz. Even in our large home theater room, we had to bring them down about 12 decibels to achieve a good blend. Unfortunately, the response of the woofer/midrange speaker begins to fall off below 150 Hertz, and the subs don't operate above 80 Hz. This hole in the upper bass response gives the SA-VA3 a rather thin sound.

If I were reviewing this product for a marketing column in *Business Week*, I'd give it an A. But if you're serious enough about home theater to be reading *Video Magazine*, the SA-VA3 probably won't satisfy you. You're better off spending a couple of hundred extra for any Pro-Logic receiver and speakers from Atlantic Technology, JBL, Rock Solid Sounds or any of several other manufacturers. ■

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27-INCH



SUPERBOWL

The bottom line in high-end performance for 13 top TVs.

Our TVs just get bigger and bigger. Last year, the average size of all TV sets sold in the U.S. jumped to 27 inches. That's a huge screen by 1970s standards, but only ordinary today. Any real sports fan would sneer at a smaller set—after all, a 20-incher makes for a pretty quiet Super Bowl party. And most videophiles consider a 27-inch set the bare minimum for home theater.

But size is the only thing that's average about the sets we're going to look at in this article. Many incorporate all the advances and special features found in the best 31- and 35-inch models. And because it's much easier to create a good-looking small picture than an outstanding large one, many 27-inchers exceed the video performance of big-screen sets costing much more.

With 27-inch TVs gaining in popularity, more manufacturers have turned their attention to the category. Companies not normally associated with high-end, direct-view TVs—like Sharp, Hitachi, Goldstar and Samsung—have created their own bonus-baby 27s packed with high-quality picture tubes and electronics.

Can these new sets make the cut with picky videophiles? Have the standard-bearers of high-end TV kept their championship form? *Video Magazine* felt there was only one way to find out: a 27-inch TV Super Bowl.

We drafted the finest 27s from 13

major manufacturers. You name 'em, and they're probably on our playing field, with two exceptions: Fisher and Mitsubishi had not started production of their new sets in time for the game. All 13 TVs evaluated below are top-of-the-line sets with S-video inputs. We lined them up in a dimly lit room and connected them to a Pioneer CLD-97 combi player and a JVC HR-S6900U S-VHS VCR through Niles Audio video distribution amps and Canare LV-61S RG-59-type video cable. The set's identities were concealed with electrical tape.

Our video talent scouts—managing editor Stan Pinkwas, technical editor Lancelot Braithwaite, assistant editor Brian Clark, and contributing editors Steve Daly and Stewart Wolpin—carefully examined every aspect of these sets' performance, and wrote "mini-reviews" of each, listing their likes and dislikes. Then we moved the sets one-by-one into our acoustically treated home theater room for a thorough audio evaluation.

Before beginning the panel tests, we warmed up the sets for a few hours, then

using Reference Recordings' *A Video Standard* laserdisc. Braithwaite and I then tweaked the sets using a variety of movie laserdiscs.

We adjusted each set to deliver what we felt was the best possible picture. After viewing the sets as calibrated, the panelists were allowed to adjust each one if they felt it could deliver a picture more to their liking. Sets with adjustable color temperature were set to be as close as possible to the NTSC production standard of 6,500 Kelvins.

Most of the sets produced dot crawl (crawling vertical edges) and hanging dot (crawling horizontal edges) from composite inputs. This problem can be solved by using a set's S-video input, as long as the source device is an S-VHS or Hi8 VCR, or one of the newer laserdisc players with a digital comb filter. Sets noted as having outstanding Y/C (luminance/chrominance) separators do not suffer these artifacts.

Unless otherwise indicated, each set is equipped with two video/stereo audio inputs (one with S-video), a video/stereo audio output that carries the signals



Starting Lineup: *Video Magazine* editors examine Disney's *Pinocchio* laserdisc on a line of 27-inch TVs, identified only by number. The sets were evaluated for such factors as brightness, accuracy and detail.

measured each one's color temperature at factory presets. We then calibrated each set as near to the standards of the Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers (SMPTE) as possible

for whatever's on the screen, a variable-level audio output for connecting to a stereo system, picture-in-picture, an on/off timer, a sleep timer, channel lock-out and a universal remote that controls a

J.R. ROST

SUPERBOWL

VCR and a cable box.

Because we relied on our eyes to judge the sets, and used test patterns only to calibrate the sets and evaluate specific problems, the nature of our panel tests is subjective. We measured only the brightness and color temperature of each set. This is an appropriate way to judge TV sets, because opinions about them vary wildly—some of our panelists loved certain sets that others didn't like at all. For this reason, you should use our tests only as a starting point. Ultimately, TV buyers must trust their own judgment.

All of these sets use onscreen menus for control of picture and sound adjustments, and access to special features. None of these systems is truly elegant—all can be frustrating from time to time, but you'll get used to them. When you shop, try out the set's menu system to make sure you can live with it. (TV manufacturers could stand to devote more effort toward improving the ergonomics of these menu systems.)

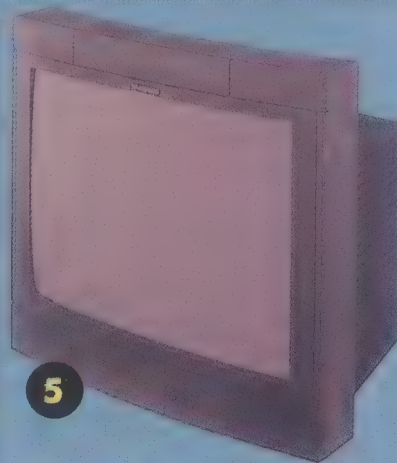
Many of the sets use the new dark-tinted picture tubes; the Proton has a separate, dark contrast screen. Dark tinting is something of a buzzword in video, but in practice, it can mean anything from a very dark tint to a barely perceptible one. Again, use your own judgment—don't assume that because a set has a dark tube it has a good picture.

The reviews begin below, in alphabetical order. They're accompanied by a visual reference guide to all 13 sets, including their key strengths and weaknesses.

GOLDSTAR GCT2754S

With a color temperature of 9,700 Kelvins, this set had the coolest picture of the bunch. Most of the panelists found it too blue to enjoy. All noticed significant horizontal geometric distortion caused by flawed linearity—images in the center of the screen looked fine, but images towards the sides were stretched.

The Goldstar had the least overscan of any set, on both the sides and the top and bottom. "This is great for people who hate overscanning," one panelist noted, "but in many cases it can display a piece of the vertical interval, and



5

27-Inch Playbook: How The Sets Compare

1.

RCA F87700MC

Price: \$699

Pros: A decent picture with lots of contrast. It's a reasonable price. Features: On-screen menu. Color, picture, and sound adjustments.

2.

Goldstar GCT2754S

Price: \$799

Pros: Excellent picture, dark contrast screen. Good picture with satisfactory contrast. Features: Color, picture, and sound adjustments. Very good picture.

3.

Proton VT2807

Price: \$799

Pros: Good picture, dark contrast screen. Good picture with satisfactory contrast. Features: Color, picture, and sound adjustments.

4.

Phillips 927541

Price: \$799

Pros: Excellent picture with lots of contrast. Good picture with satisfactory contrast. Features: Color, picture, and sound adjustments.

5.

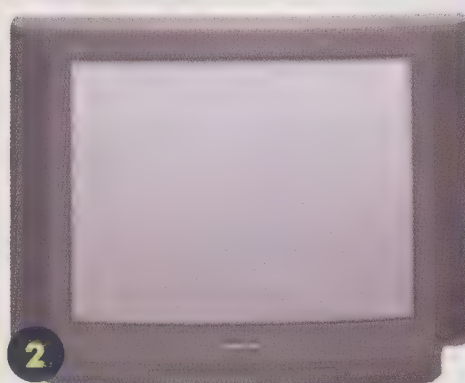
Samsung TX102720

Price: \$699

Pros: Very good picture with lots of contrast. Good picture with satisfactory contrast. Features: Color, picture, and sound adjustments.



1



2



3



4

6.

JVC AV-27BX4

Price: \$999

Pros: Good picture and sound, loads of features, infrared wireless headphones.

Cons: Slightly phosphorescent color, doesn't have the detail of \$1,000-and-up sets.

7.

Hitachi 27AX4B

Price: \$799

Pros: A very bright picture that doesn't sacrifice color, good performance at a modest price.

Cons: Domes on test signals, somewhat tinny sound, only one video input.

8.

Sony KV-27V55

Price: \$995

Pros: Good depth and detail, nearly perfect geometry, good flesh tones, big sound.

Cons: Slight bluish cast, very sensitive to signal level, flimsy remote.

9.

Zenith SL2784BT

Price: \$799

Pros: Good detail and color saturation, smooth sound.

Cons: Much interference from power supply, blacks have a greenish cast.

10.

ProScan PS27152

Price: \$1,099

Pros: Great picture with outstanding color and Y/C separation, best sound we've heard from a 27-inch set, lots of features.

Cons: Slight lack of detail and depth, high price.

11.

Sharp 27C-S3900

Price: \$829

Pros: Pleasing picture with good detail and color, good sound.

Cons: Insufficient contrast, limited features.

12.

Panasonic CT-27XF10

Price: \$1,299

Pros: A great picture, with exceptional detail, depth, contrast, color saturation and Y/C separation, great sound, extensive feature package.

Cons: Needs constant tweaking, slight bluish cast, very expensive.

13.

Toshiba CN27C90

Price: \$899

Pros: Somewhat unusual but very pleasing picture, good sound with big bass and nice DSP surround, reasonable price.

Cons: Excessive dot crawl, convergence off.



Dark Tubes Stake A Claim

BY MARTIN LEVINE

If this year's color TV sets seem darker than last year's, resist the temptation to reach for a dust cloth. TV tubes have been dimmed by design, in the firm belief that a darker picture tube can brighten your day.

The apparant paradox is based on insight into how people perceive video images. As a result, major manufacturers will be offering large, high-end TV sets with darkly tinted faceplates or picture tubes. The new look is intended to increase picture contrast by up to 40 percent. Because the human eye reads higher contrast as higher resolution, images on the new, darker sets will seem sharper than they would with old CRTs. "More contrast also gives the feel of more depth to the picture," adds Tom Edwards, assistant general manager of Panasonic's TV division.

This isn't the first time manufacturers have opted for a darker picture. Older viewers may remember the frosted glass tubes of the '60s. This time, to prevent any loss in actual brightness and picture detail, manufacturers are complementing the darker faceplates with a new generation of electron gun that runs hotter and focuses more accurately. Because a hotter electron gun could cause doming effects, which viewers would notice as picture discoloration, TV makers are also replacing the conventional iron shadow mask with an Invar mask that uses a sturdier nickel-iron alloy. You'll find the Invar masks in just about all new sets 27-inches and larger.

The new picture tubes were actually born out of the TV industry's reaction to Panasonic's Gaoo TV sets, now about two years old.

Gaoo sets use a flatter, darker tinted picture tube than conventional sets. Although Matsushita, Panasonic's parent, reportedly tried for two years to convince Corning Asahi and Owens NEG, the only two sources of picture tube glass in the U.S., to make its glass darker, the change only began this year. "We heard Sony was planning to introduce a dark tint so we pushed the button on it," says a senior executive at Matsushita's U.S. picture tube operation. This quickly evolved into a full court press by other picture tube makers eager to benefit.

Why did other color TV manufacturers go along? "They really didn't have a choice, except to follow," says the Matsushita executive, since Corning and Owens supply tubes to so many companies. In fact, more than 90 percent of the TV sets in stores next year may use the new glass because Corning and Owens will shift almost all their production to tinted glass to keep costs down.

The new sets "will look better when they're off, and when there's a lot of ambient light," says Tom Carson, general manager of Thomson Consumer Electronics North American tube division. "This isn't revolutionary," Carson explains, but "it's pretty much going to be a standard."

—Martin Levine



Through a Glass Darkly: The tint for Sony's Super Triniton TV tube, as in this cross-section, is added to the faceplate with a contrast-enhancing "deep black screen coating."

SUPERBOWL

that's a minus."

The picture had many strong points, including good depth and detail, and fairly strong color. "Despite its drawbacks, this picture looks the most realistic," one panelist said.

The sound was great: big and full without boominess. The surround modes—music, movie and mono—were surprisingly good for a modestly priced 27-inch set. It also has outputs for two surround speakers, which add a pleasing ambience.

There's a good TV lurking inside this chassis. With better factory setup, Goldstar could probably solve the distortion and color problems and create a great, affordable set.

HITACHI 27AX4B

The 27AX4B grabbed our panelists' attention with its outstanding brightness—it's more than three times as bright as the dimmest set, the Zenith SL2784BT. Usually, color accuracy is sacrificed to make a set brighter, but not here: The color temperature is 6,800 Kelvins, just slightly high of the NTSC standard.

Some panelists thought the Hitachi too bright, but none faulted it much otherwise. "It achieves a very bright picture without pumping up the black level," one said, "which is great for black-and-white, because the whites look white." The brightness contributed to slight doming (brownish discoloration of whites) on test signals, but none of the panelists noticed it on movies.

The side-firing speakers sound a bit tinny. A sound expansion mode spreads the soundstage but kills the center image. The set has only one video input. It has an unusual feature that lets you leave two onscreen messages for family members. The messages appear at any time you select.

At \$799, this set is a good deal, especially if you like to watch TV in a brightly lit room.

JVC AV-27BX4

JVC TVs rank among video's best buys, combining good pictures and sound with loads of features. The AV-27BX4, one of

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the first to use JVC's flatter, reduced-curvature screen, is no exception.

The set produced a competent picture that none of the panelists raved about, but that none heavily criticized, either. The color was quite good, with a temperature of 6,600 Kelvins, although a couple of panelists thought it looked slightly phosphorescent, with an artificial glow. One liked the effect, picking the set as his second-favorite; one didn't. "Nothing too strong or too weak," another summed up.

The concealed, front-firing speakers produced a pleasingly smooth response, with particularly natural sound on voices. The set has connectors for surround speakers, which added a nice touch for movies.

The feature list is extensive: video noise reduction, a notch filter (which eliminates hanging dots and dot crawl), front video/stereo audio inputs and auto volume (which learns the volumes you use at different times of the day and automatically sets the appropriate level

when turning on the set). It also includes a set of infrared wireless headphones, which can monitor the sound of the main picture or the PIP picture, so two people can watch two shows at once. These features easily justify the set's \$999 price.

PANASONIC CT-27XF40

This reduced-curvature set reminded us of a race car: It needs constant tweaking, but when you get it dialed in, it's awesome! Most panelists ranked it among their favorites, enthusing about its outstanding detail, depth, contrast and color saturation. The Y/C separation was almost perfect—you shouldn't see dot crawl or hanging dots from any sources. The panelists' only complaint was that its 8,900-Kelvin color temperature (the lowest of its three settings) threw certain colors off, giving the picture a slightly bluish cast.

It was especially good on black-and-white. "They called early movie theaters the 'silver screen' because the picture looked silver," one panelist explained. "That appearance is what I look for in black-and-white, and this set's got it."

The sound was equally impressive. The set's eight-band, onscreen graphic equalizer allows detailed fine-tuning. The set's music surround mode provided a broad sound with a solid center image, and its movie surround mode produced an even more expansive sound. The bass sounded great, particularly with a little boost from the equalizer.

The set is packed with features, including front S-video/video/stereo audio input, a headphone jack, an input for using the center speakers with a Dolby Pro-Logic system, two RF inputs with a loop-through for a cable box, and a multi button that lets you program in six commands and access the sequence at the touch of one button. Plain and simple, this set's a must-see—it's expensive at \$1,299, but worth it.

PHILIPS 27P341

Most consumer TVs have color temperatures well above NTSC standard, but this one's an exception: At 5,500 Kelvins, it's way below NTSC standard, giving the picture a reddish cast. One panelist found the look attractive and picked the set as his favorite, citing a "creamy" quality to the blacks and good shadow detail.

The other panelists agreed on shadow detail, but found the picture far too warm for their tastes, and complained about a lack of sharpness. Two noted a slight pulsating effect, perhaps the result of chroma AM noise.

The set's sound is of average quality for a TV. It has surround speaker connections, but the effect of the surround speakers is rather subtle. The set has only one video input and no video/fixed-level audio output. The PIP doesn't work with S-video signals, but it offers a useful channel scan feature that displays still-picture windows from three channels on a blue background.

The 27P341's unusual picture may attract some fans—it certainly found one here.

PROSCAN PS27152

Thomson's ProScan sets immediately won a following among videophiles for their impeccable color accuracy. For the same reason, the PS27152 ranked among our panelists' favorites. One raved, "Terrific! Very lifelike. Bright without being overly contrasty. Great fleshtones." "Consistently good on all discs," said another. Y/C separation was nearly perfect. Three panelists found it somewhat lacking in detail and depth, though.

The sound was simply unbelievable for a 27-inch TV set. Close your eyes, and you might be fooled into thinking you're listening to a small rack system. The set uses side-mounted woofers and front midrange/tweeters, combined with a six-band equalizer, surround speaker outputs and four surround modes (Dolby, matrix, stadium and hall) with adjustable effect level. This set would be perfect for a bedroom home theater.

The set also has a channel guide that shows small still-frames from 12 TV channels, a headphone jack, two RF inputs with a loop-through output for a cable box, and a universal remote that controls 2 VCRs, a cable box and an audio component. It even has a digital zoom feature that lets you magnify any part of the picture (although you get lots of pixelization at high magnification). Even for a \$1,099 set, that's an impressive feature package. All in all, another must-see.

PROTON VT295

Proton's T295 (also reviewed in "Video tests," July '93) has a removable contrast screen. The screen proved controversial: Our panelists appreciated its positive effect on detail, depth and contrast, but felt it dimmed the picture too much.

"It has very neutral grays, and the most three-dimensional picture," one enthused. "It's just too dim," another dissented. "The black level [brightness] can't be set deep enough." The screen can be easily removed, but you'll miss its

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BY FRANK BEACHAM

THE

ULTIMATE

Alliances hold the key as companies scramble to build digital empires.

The video industry is caught up in a great game in which the playing screen is international, the players are corporate, the power buttons are digital, and anyone with deep enough pockets gets a turn. The players score by creating new entertainment or communication systems. With billions of dollars at stake, the risks have never been greater, but the end result—the reinvention of our electronic infrastructure—will be little short of revolutionary. With so much underway, here's a quick guide to key video-related developments you can soon expect to see, and the forces behind them.

Consumer electronics firms, entertainment conglomerates, TV networks, cable companies, research labs, phone companies, and computer makers are joining forces as never before in a seemingly bewildering variety of mergers, acquisitions and cooperative ventures. The projects range from cable boxes and video CDs to HDTV, from 500-channel

VIDEO GAME

networks to interactive shopping programs. And no one is doing it alone. Virtually anyone who devises, or finances, a new way to entertain, or transmit programs or information does so as part of a partnership or alliance among companies with complementary strengths and technologies.

Rivals like TV manufacturers Philips and Thomson find that on some issues, like HDTV, they can no longer afford not to cooperate. Companies like cable giant Time Warner and the regional phone company US West, which once saw little to gain from each other's interests, are now joined at the wallet.

The scramble for position is playing itself out so swiftly that even those who follow technological change are feeling overwhelmed. In fact, confusion and apprehension about the future are key rea-

sons behind much recent activity. A lot of big players, unsure of where they'll stand when today's cutting edges become mainstream, are hedging their bets by joining in projects they feel they can't afford to ignore.

No one fully comprehends where the new media technologies are leading. Many projects are driven less by the video marketplace than by new technology, and marketing theories about what the public will accept. What we do know is that a network of networks capable of fusing video, audio and text is rapidly taking shape. It encompasses an almost endless number of new products, services and high-tech alliances.

With phone companies developing video services, cable companies planning phone services, game companies preparing to broadcast, and computer companies in the middle of everything, the emerging media order promises capabilities far beyond what today's TVs and telephones can deliver. It will affect the way information is carried over virtually every medium, the content of the information being transmitted, even the ways information will be controlled.

The accompanying chart is a status report on the new video order, a window into more than a dozen projects, all promising significant breakthroughs, by recently allied companies. Their impact will be felt not just in homes, but in offices, schools, public institutions, even shoulder bags

continued on page 91

KEY PROJECTS FOR AN AGE OF ALLIANCES

IN THE WORKS	WHO'S DOING IT	WHY THEY'RE DOING IT	WHAT IT WILL MEAN	WHEN IT'S DUE
Advanced cable TV network with interactive features; will be compatible with hand-held computers and wireless phones.	US West, Time Warner	Time Warner gains capital to develop fiber-optic cable system; US West gains income from Time Warner movies	New types of interactive entertainment for Time Warner's 7 million cable subscribers	To be determined
An open-architecture standard for interactive TV equipment and software	Time Warner, Tele-Communications, Inc.	To avoid compatibility problems while moving toward an advanced interactive TV system	All cable equipment and software will work on any system.	Mid-1990s
A national HDTV broadcast standard	General Instrument, MIT, AT&T, NBC, Philips, Thomson, Zenith, Sarnoff Research Center	To avoid further costly, time-consuming tests of incompatible HDTV systems	Over-the-air HDTV programs	HDTV standard in 1994, first broadcasts in 1996
ScriptX, a computer language for devices combining video, audio, graphics and text.	Kalieda (formed by Apple and IBM), Macromedia, Mitsubishi, Hitachi, Toshiba, Creative Technology	Perceived industry need for multimedia programs that can run on different systems	A universal multimedia standard allowing any CD-ROM device to play any kind of CD	Late 1994
New type of user-friendly cable TV converter box	Microsoft, Intel, General Instrument	Microsoft has operating software, General Instrument has converter boxes, and Intel has a chip to power the system	An easy-to-use consumer navigation system for a greatly expanded cable system	Late 1994
New type of user-friendly cable TV converter box	Time Warner, Silicon Graphics, Scientific-Atlanta, Toshiba	Time Warner needs a converter box for an interactive system it's creating in Florida; the other companies will develop it.	An easy-to-use consumer navigation system for a greatly expanded cable system	Late 1994
New type of user-friendly cable TV converter box	Motorola, Scientific Atlanta, Apple, IBM	Top computer companies don't want to be left out when TV sets evolve into computers.	An easy-to-use consumer navigation system for a greatly expanded cable system	Late 1994

IN THE WORKS	WHO'S DOING IT	WHY THEY'RE DOING IT	WHAT IT WILL MEAN	WHEN IT'S DUE
Video dial-tone system in New Jersey that can carry phone calls and 64 TV channels	Bell Atlantic, Future Vision of America	To compete with cable operators for video programs and services	End of cable monopolies as phone and cable technologies converge	After FCC approves, and legal challenges are addressed
An interactive videogame channel on cable TV	Sega, Time Warner, Tele-Communications, Inc.	To create new kinds of intereractive entertainment.	Sega Genesis owners will be able to download Sega games over cable to play at home	1994
Interactive technology for cable TV shopping programs	Prodigy, Microsoft, General Instrument, QVC Network, Home Shopping Network	To merge online services with cable, creating new, easier ways to spend money while watching TV	You'll use Prodigy to order products shown on home shopping channels.	1994
New ways to receive the news	News in the Future Consortium consisting of Gannett, Knight-Ridder, Times Mirror, and 14 other news organizations	To guard against the possibility of newspaper publishing becoming obsolete	Personalized newspapers combining video, text and audio delivered online, and to wireless handheld reading devices	Online newspapers starting now; other projects to be determined
New home shopping channel	R.H. Macy, Home Shopping Network	To capitalize on the magic Macy name	A virtual department store, over-the-air	1994
World standard for putting linear video on 5-inch discs	Matsushita, Sony, JVC, Philips	To avoid a Beta/VHS format war over new video media	Movie CDs and inexpensive video CD players	Fall 1993 for discs; 1994 for players
Cable TV on your PC	Internet, Continental Cablevision, Performance Systems International	To expand markets for cable TV and online computer services	TV-quality video, hi-fi audio and multimedia services on computer net serving 15 million customers	1994
Inexpensively produced TV shows	Brandon Tartikoff, Quincy Jones	A marriage of convenience (Tartikoff lives in New Orleans where Jones owns a TV station) to cope with shrinking TV budgets	Pilot for Bigtime TV, a half-hour variety show, followed by other productions	Fall 1993

Rave Review of Definitive's ViVA Gold Award-Winning Bipolar Home Theater System

HOME THEATER

BY BRENT BUTTERWORTH
AND KENNETH KORMAN

Definitive Technology creates a speaker system for the real world.

Innovation is in the eye of the beholder. This is especially true in the world of consumer electronics, where money and other resources are so often devoted to developing either the "best" possible products—with little concern for the eventual cost to consumers—or to perfecting the most saleable items, those with the loudest bells and whistles, the cheapest parts and the highest profit margins. What about those of us looking for products that strike a perfect balance between price and performance? And wouldn't developing more products of this sort constitute true innovation?

At least one manufacturer appears to be listening: Baltimore-based Definitive Technology has developed what may be the first audio/video speaker system for the real world. Centered around the company's well-received BP10 stereo speakers (\$1,100/pair), the Definitive Technology home theater system adds the C1 center-channel speaker (\$299) and two BP2 surround speakers (\$250 each). The result is a system

that does a brilliant job of reproducing both Dolby Surround movie soundtracks and musical performances in traditional stereo—all for less than \$2,000. Simply put, this is probably the most complete, well-rounded audio/video speaker system we've heard.

The design of Definitive speakers also sets them apart. All the BP-series speakers are bipolar: Identical drivers on the front and back of each cabinet let the speaker fire in both directions at once. Each BP10 incorporates two two-way speakers, while each BP20—a high-way speaker alternative to the BP10 at \$1,600 a pair—adds an extra woofer on each side.

The bipolar design gives the speakers a much more ambient sound because, like most real-life sound sources, they're omnidirectional. The direct sound is the same as with conventional speakers, but the sound from the rear drivers reflects as if it were generated by real instru-

ments and voices.

The BP2 surround speakers also benefit from bipolar design. Like the dipole speakers used in THX-certified home systems, the BP2s create an ambient sound field when placed high and to the sides of a room, with lots of reflected sound and little or no direct sound. This makes surround effects much more natural—they can't be attributed to a specific speaker. Definitive refers to the BP2 as bipolar because its two halves are wired in phase, while THX dipolar speakers are wired out of phase.

The C1 center speaker doesn't use bipolar design, but it does use drivers similar to those in the BP10s and BP20s. The result is that sounds move from speaker to speaker with minimal timbre change. Because the BP2s are also well-matched to the BP10s and BP20s, the Definitive system produces a coherent sound field. Sounds move gradually around the room—you can locate them at various points between the speakers, rather than just hearing them jump around the room from speaker to speaker.

Play a favorite CD on the Definitive main speakers, and their character immediately asserts itself. Several Video Magazine editors described them as "sweet-sounding." They never sound harsh or glaring, and the sound is never fatiguing, even after you've exhausted a full carousel of CDs. But Definitive didn't omit anything to get that sweet sound—the highs, mids and lows all excel for a speaker in this price range, although the sound is not quite as detailed as you get with some top-notch, costlier audiophile speakers. Chances are once you hear the Definitive speakers, you'll promptly forget about your equipment and just enjoy the sound.

Most audiophile speakers are designed for audiophile tastes, typically classical music and jazz, and often don't sound good on rock and pop music. We were most impressed by the BP10's ability to sound great on any music we tried—they work just as well for Bach violin sonatas as for Nirvana. We also tried a pair of BP20s in place of the BP10s, but found them too bass-heavy—

continued on page 118

Reprinted from the
November 1992 issue
of Video Magazine

HOME THEATER

continued from page 36

some rock fans and action-movie enthusiasts may prefer them, but we think most people will find the BP10s' sound much more balanced.

The movie sound was equally stunning. The BP10s offer just the right amount of bass—enough to make you feel crashes and punches, but not enough to muddy the sound or give you a headache. The beautiful, ambient sound of the main speakers works very well for movies, especially on soundtracks with lots of music. We achieved very pleasing results with a wide variety of equipment, including Yamaha's DSP-A1000 A/V receiver, and THX-certified gear like Lexicon's CP-3 decoder and NAD 2400 amplifiers.

The center speaker matches the sound of the main speakers much better than with most center speakers, many of which use only two inexpensive four-inch drivers rather than a real full-range design. The small size of the center speaker does compromise the timbre matching somewhat, though—it's not the perfect match THX systems achieve using three identical front speakers. But here, Definitive made the right compromise. The C1 center speaker fits comfortably on any 27-inch or larger TV set, while THX center speakers all but require front-projection monitors.

The bipolar surround speakers make all the difference in the world. Surround sound can be annoying if you use a conventional speaker pointed directly at the listener. With the BP2s, you feel like you're part of the movie environment. We expect bipolar and dipolar speakers will soon become as much a part of surround sound as Dolby Pro-Logic.

Overall, the Definitive system seems a perfect fit for the vast majority of home theater users, as both novices and old hands will appreciate its performance and reasonable price. Add an A/V receiver, a combination CD/LD player and a good monitor, and you'll be set—you shouldn't have to buy any more hardware for quite some time. And that allows a larger budget for what really makes a home theater sing: high-quality video software, preferably laserdiscs.

We hope other manufacturers follow Definitive's lead. After all, value never goes out of style—and "real world" audio/video products just might turn out to be the next big thing.



Sonic Solution:
Definitive Technology's music-and-movies speaker system—BP20 and BP10 main speakers (right), C1 center speaker (below, shown vertically without grille and horizontally with grille) and BP2 bipolar surround speakers (below).

W

hen MGM/UA senior vice president and general manager George Feltenstein decided last year that he wanted to reissue old "Looney Tunes" cartoons in a deluxe laserdisc collection, his colleagues laughed. "No one thought there was any value to them," he says. The company laughed all the way to the bank, however, when sales for the \$100 five-disc set went through the roof: "When we put out the first set, I would have been happy if we sold 3,000," he notes. "We sold 14,000."

And that's not all, folks.

Long considered kid stuff, animation has become the art form for just about everyone. How else to explain the theatrical gold uncovered by *Aladdin*, *Beauty and the Beast*, even *The Jetsons* (which earned \$5 million its opening weekend)? Or the new 24-hour Cartoon Network on cable TV? And what about the proliferation of cartoon memorabilia, from the *Fantasia* animation "cel" Sotheby's recently sold for \$93,500 to the Mickey Mouse watches, Popeye mugs and Bugs Bunny designer jackets that permeate suburban malls?

Cartoons are hot—but they're absolutely sizzling on videocassette and laserdisc, their new and well-deserved homes. From Bugs Bunny and Mickey Mouse to Wild Japanese animation like *Akira*, there are so many current titles, it takes 97 pages of the *Whole Toon Catalog* (plus regular supplements) to keep up with the releases. MGM/UA has issued four \$100 "Looney Tunes" laserdisc boxed sets, as well as similar packages like *The Compleat Tex Avery* and *The Art of Tom and Jerry Part I and Part II*. Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* has sold 25 million copies, making it the most popular home video ever, followed by the 53-year-old *Fantasia*, which has clocked in at 14.2 million videos sold.

The variety of animation titles currently on video is astonishing.



Heads Up! Anything can happen on MGM/UA's *The Compleat Tex Avery*.

There are environmentally conscious tapes like Picture Start's *Greentoones*; sophisticated antiwar dramas such as Central Park Media's *Grave of the Fireflies*; weird experimental collages like those presented on Lumivision's *Anima-*

tion Celebration Laserdisc Collection; such wacky sci-fi comedies as U.S. Magna's *Project A-Ko*; and even violent, NC-17-rated cartoons like the controversial *Urotsukidoji*; *Legend of the Overfiend*, from Anime 18. Whatever your tastes, there's now an animated title at the lo-



From Elmer Fudd TOON

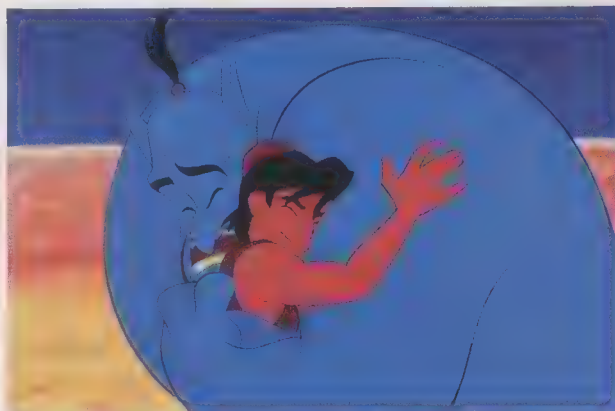


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Animation has been popular ever since film's earliest days, when newspaper cartoonist Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo* wowed audiences in 1911. But it took Walt Disney and a rambunctious mouse named Mickey to bring cartoons to the fore with *Steamboat Willie* (1928). "[Walt Disney] did not invent the medium," observes film historian Leonard Maltin in his book *Of Mice and Magic*, "but one could say that he defined it."

Disney institutionalized the form, building a creative factory that scripted and storyboarded cartoons as no one had done before. He added sound and then Technicolor when none of his competitors saw the need. He created the first full-length animated feature—*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*—despite widespread skepticism from the film industry, which dubbed the project "Disney's Folly." And throughout his career, he developed new processes that enhanced perspective and added to the believability and fluidity of his company's cartoons.

Walt Disney Home Video has also



Mass Appeal: (Clockwise from top) "Looney Tunes" were the first animated shorts for adults, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* heralded a new era of quality animation, *The Art of Tom and Jerry* preserves MGM/UA's raucous cartoons, and Disney's *Aladdin* may become the best-selling video ever.



been among the first to realize the tape and laserdisc potential of its huge cartoon library. In the early '80s, the studio released many of its classic short cartoons on "Limited Gold Edition" tapes, cleverly marketing them as collectors'

items that would only be sold for a limited time. Since then, Disney has perfected the "buy now or miss it later" hype, limiting availability on such popular titles as *The Lady and the Tramp*, *101 Dalmations* and *Pinocchio*. ▶

to *Aladdin*, the art of animation soars on video.

REVOLUTION

TOONS



Pinocchio provides a good example of Disney's marketing approach: Though the company denied it would ever be released on video—a claim now being made for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, despite rumors of a 1994 video release—the tape hit the shelves for a short time in 1985 and quickly went on “moratorium.” This meant that stores could sell off remaining stock but could not reorder after a specified date, thus inflating demand for the title. Seven years later, Disney trumpeted a new, restored version of *Pinocchio* on tape and disc, again warning that it would be pulled and “not available again in this century.”

Despite their tremendous success on video, these good-natured, sentimental Disney pictures are primarily aimed at children. It took Warner Bros.' “Looney Tunes” and “Merrie Melodies” cartoons of the late '30, '40s and '50s to add an adult sensibility to Disney's techniques. The six-minute Warner shorts use jazz, be-bop and classical music as the backdrop for wacky tales full of chases, literate gags, reality-breaking humor, slapstick violence and outrageous puns.

Unlike the Disney material, however, the Warner library has had a scattered history on tape and disc, partly because of a tangled ownership situation. Most of the cartoons from 1931 to 1948 were sold in the 1950s and are now distributed by MGM/UA; post-'48 shorts are still controlled by Warner.

Until George Feltenstein took over at MGM/UA, most of that company's releases were packaged under the “Vid-



A Splash of Color: (Clockwise from top) Central Park Media's *Urotsukidoji: Legend of the Overfiend*, Lumivision's *Incredible Animation Collection*, and Jay Ward's *Rocky and Bullwinkle*.

dy-Oh! for kids” label, and were often poorly edited. Feltenstein noted the success of Warner's 1985 “Golden Jubilee 24-Karat Collection” series (still available at \$12.95 apiece), which compiled eight-cartoon collections centering on individual characters like *Porky Pig's Screwball Comedies* and *Elmer Fudd's Comedy Capers*, and included notes by film historian Leonard Maltin.

Feltenstein soon put together the “Cartoon Movie Star” series of tapes that included Warner characters and also such MGM stars as Tom and Jerry and United Artists' *Pink Panther*. That, in turn, led to *The Golden Age of Looney Tunes*, which Feltenstein initially planned as a disc-only series. (MGM/UA began releasing tape versions of *The Golden Age of Looney Tunes* in 1993. The first ten tapes, available at \$12.95 each, duplicate the material on the initial laserdisc set; more are promised.)

Warner Home Video has taken a different tack: In addition to the “24 Karat” series, its cassette releases include theatrical compilation movies like *The Looney Looney Looney Bugs Bunny Movie* (\$14.95). For laserdisc, the company shunned MGM's boxed-set approach in favor of six single-platter releases, grouped by character or subject. *Daffy Duck in Duck Victory* (\$34.98) is a typical 14-cartoon Warner laser set, and features *Duck Dodgers in the 24-1/2 Century*, an inspiration of sorts for *Star Wars*.

That success has led to other tape and disc releases which reflect animation's less-than-golden years, the 1950s. With rising costs and competition from television, theatrical shorts moved to the cheaper venue of TV, but suffered from inferior scripts and less fluid or “limited” animation.

The big exception was Jay Ward,

continued on page 124



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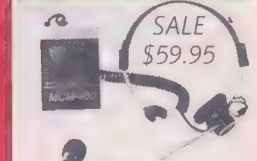
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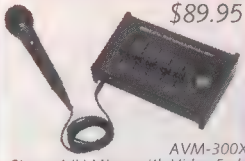
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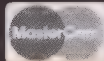


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HI8



BUYING GUIDE

From A to zoom, a feature-packed shopping kit for quality camcorders.

It's time to buy a camcorder. You know you want one, or perhaps you need a new one, and you've already settled on a format—Hi8. You like the superior picture quality, the long recording time and the generally compact size.

But there's a lot to choose among. Hi8 camcorders tend to have personalities, like actors auditioning to be part of your home videos. Some are sophisticated leading-men types like Sony's CCD-VX3 with its three CCD chips. Others, like Sharp's VL-HL100V with its four-inch viewfinder are more like flashy newcomers. Even the prices range across the board, from an affordable \$1,200 to a hefty \$3,800. How can you tell which will work out the best for you?

You can start with this guide and the accompanying chart, which covers 20 Hi8 camcorders from nine companies, all the models now being produced. We're going to walk you through the key features they have in common, and the important ways in which they differ. You'll find it essential whether you're looking for a shooting machine able to give you significant control over all aspects of your videography or whether you're just looking for a high-quality point-and-shoot camcorder for family events.

If you're among the former group, you'll need to know about iris and white balance settings, mic and headphone jacks, and editing protocols. If you're a more casual shooter, chances are you'll still want a camcorder with enough user-controllable features to let you grow as your technique becomes more accomplished.

Let's start by considering some features you don't have to be concerned about because they're shared by all Hi8 models. The list is impressive. It includes hi-fi stereo audio, through-the-lens focusing, a flying erase head and automatic focus, iris and white balance settings. In fact, all Hi8 camcorders have full automatic modes, so you don't always have to worry about custom settings. All have zoom lenses of at least 8x and virtually all use an edit protocol to facilitate automated editing with other components.

But it's how they differ that counts most, and here are the features that most deserve your attention:

- **Image Stabilization.** Exotic only a couple of years ago, image stabilizers are now widely used to reduce the vertical

Mini & Maxi:
Sony's new CCD-TR500 (above) and Canon's classic L1 (right) with interchangeable lens.



BRAND	MODEL	PRICE	ZOOM RATIO	DIGITAL ZOOM	IMAGE STABILIZER	EDIT PROTOCOL	MANUAL IRIS	MANUAL WHITE BALANCE	COLOR VIEWFINDER	DIGITAL FX	PROGRAMMED AE*	TITLING	MIC JACK	HEADPHONE JACK	LOWEST LUX
CANON	UCS2	\$2,799	15X	30X	N	LANC	Y	Y	N	Y	6	C, S	Y	Y	4
CANON	UCS3	\$2,799	12X	24X	N	LANC	Y	Y	N	Y	6	C, S	Y	Y	3
CANON	UCS4	\$2,799	10X	30X	N	LANC	Y	Y	N	Y	6	C	Y	Y	4
CANON	UCS1	\$2,099	10X	N	N	LANC	Y	Y	N	N	6	C, S	Y	Y	5
CANON	UCS3	\$2,099	8X	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	6	N	Y	N	3
CANON	UCS5	\$1,599	12X	24X	O	LANC	N	Y	N	N	5	N	Y	Y	3
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HITACHI	VM-H39A	\$1,800	8X	64X	E	Synchro Edit	N	N	Y	Y	N	C	N	N	2
HITACHI	VM-H39A	\$1,800	8X	64X	E	Synchro Edit	N	N	N	Y	N	C	N	N	3
HITACHI	VM-H57A	\$1,199	8X	16X	E	Synchro Edit	N	N	N	Y	N	C	N	N	1
HITACHI	VM-H57A	\$1,199	8X	16X	E	Synchro Edit	N	N	N	Y	N	C	Y	N	3
NIKON	VN750	\$1,800	10X	N	O	LANC	Y	Y	N	Y	N	S	Y	Y	3
NIKON	VN750	\$1,800	8X	64X	E	Synchro Edit	N	N	N	Y	N	C	N	N	3
RICOH	R-18H	\$1,799	10X	N	O	LANC	Y	Y	N	Y	N	S	Y	Y	3
SHARP	VD-R100H	\$2,199	8X	N	E	N	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	3
SONY	CCD-VX3	\$3,800	12X	N	N	LANC, RCTC	Y	Y	N	N	4	S	Y	Y	4
SONY	CCD-TR101	\$1,800	10X	N	O	LANC	Y	Y	N	Y	N	S	Y	Y	3
SONY	CCD-TR101	\$1,800	8X	N	N	LANC	Y	N	N	N	3	N	Y	Y	3
SONY	CCD-FX710	\$1,400	10X	N	N	LANC	Y	Y	N	N	2	S	Y	Y	3

Hi8 GUIDE

and horizontal jitter created by a shaky hand or a moving vehicle. Optical stabilizers, like those used by Canon and Sony, adjust the image before it reaches the light sensor, while electronic stabilizers, like those used by most other manufacturers, make their corrections using digital circuitry.

Our experience has shown that optical systems perform better overall, exhibiting less evidence of their presence. The best optical systems are virtually transparent. The shortcomings of electronic systems are most evident during pan shots, which introduce horizontal movement they are not designed to correct for. Most electronic stabilizers also degrade the video image slightly.

● **Manual exposure controls.** A manual iris control will give you more control over sticky lighting situations like back-lighting, which can lead to darkened faces on auto-iris camcorders because the auto exposure takes a brightness level from the light in back of rather than in front of the subject. With full control of the iris you're able to open it to compensate in situations where automatic

setting adjusts the color for the type of light you are shooting in. Some camcorders have a setting for indoor light and sunlight along with auto white balance. Moving to different parts of a room can cause your color to shift as a camcorder's automatic white balance shifts for the type of light in each spot. Some camcorders have a manual lock position that lets you set the white balance in each room or setting by using a white card or a white lens cap. This way it won't change as you move around.

● Edit protocol.

Edit protocols are electronic languages that camcorders use to communicate and receive commands from other pieces of equipment. These are commands such as pause, start, rewind and search that are necessary for editing

protocol. Developed by Sony, LANC is used in Hi8 models by Sony, Canon, Nikon and Ricoh. Many LANC-compatible edit controllers and desktop vid-



Pocket Pal: Hitachi's VMH39A has image stabilization and a flat profile.



Prosuming Passion: Sony's VX3 Handycam Pro has 3 CCDs and manual overrides for key controls.

settings just don't cut it.

Many camcorders also have a back-light compensator (BLC) that opens the iris one or two stops. While this helps, full manual control is preferable.

● **White balance.** The white balance

footage. Two machines that speak the same language, or edit protocol, can be operated through one piece of equipment, like an edit controller.

Most Hi8 camcorders use the local application network control (LANC)

eo products are available. Camcorders with the synchro edit protocol are usually only effective with a VCR from the same manufacturer.

● **Mic and headphone jacks.** Both jacks are essential for serious shooting. But whether your shooting needs require them is your decision. Camcorders capable of accepting an outboard mic are freer to move about a subject, breaking the imaginary string that keeps you near a subject to pick up their words. At parties, an external mic may be the only way to get comments you'll be able to hear later. And any external mic is likely to be better than the one in your camcorder. Without the ability to monitor your audio through a headphone jack, you are truly shooting in the dark. It's easy to come away with nothing but wind noise unless you take special care.

● **Titling features.** Titling can be done two ways. One is with a character generator. If it's built into the camcorder, you'll laboriously scroll through the alphabet, constructing each word letter by letter. This can be tedious and annoying, especially if the quality of the text isn't especially pleasing when you're done. A character generator in a camcorder is a convenience. Its output is not intended to look like a professional video graphic.

The other way camcorders make titles is through a digital superimposer. The only limit here is your imagination.

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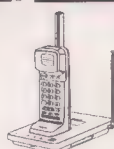


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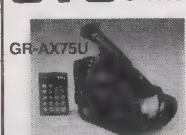


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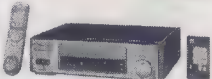
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 AG7750 PLAYER / RECORDER
 AGA96 CONTROLLER
 AGF700 TIME CODE GENERATOR

MONITORS

1383Y 13" VIDEO MONITOR
 1383VY 13" WITH TUNER
 2083Y 20" VIDEO MONITOR
 2083VY 20" WITH TUNER

A/V MIXERS

WJ-MX30 DIGITAL FIELD SYNCH
 WJ-MX50 DIGITAL FRAME SYNCH

SONY AUTHORIZED DEALER

EDITING DECKS

EVO-9500 HI-8 RECORD / PLAY
 EVO-9700 HI-8 DUAL DECK
 SVO-9600 SVHS VCR
 SVP-9000 SVHS PLAY ONLY

LASER DISC PLAYERS

MDP-1150 LASER BAR CODE

MONITORS

GVM 13110 NTSC / PAL / RGB
 GVM 20120 20" MULTI SCAN

FutureVideo® A/B ROLL EDIT CONTROL SYSTEM

- **EDIT LINK 3300**
 Desktop inter-format A/B Roll edit controller with RS-232C port, 3 programmable GPI triggers. Reads Hi8 RC time code.
- **EDIT LINK 3300/TC**
 Similar to 3300, also reads SMPTE time code.

IMAGE PROCESSING SYSTEMS

COMPUTER MS-DOS Amiga
CAPTURE BOARD Opalvision Video Toaster
SOFTWARE Playmotion Brilliance
CONTROLLER Diaquest BCD
CAMERA DXC-107 DXC-930

*CALL FOR CUSTOM CONFIGURATIONS

SONY Hi-8 Computer Video Deck



- Provides VISCA compatibility
- Records or dubs (RC) time code
- Can record PCM digital audio



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 Provides the key to integrating video cameras, recorders, and display devices into the personal computer environment.

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BERLIN

What's new
and notable at
the world's
biggest, showiest
A/V extravaganza.

DIARY



Tent City: Center displays at the vast Funkausstellung A/V show.

T

he video industry is about change and progress, two dynamic elements nowhere more evident than in Berlin, the restored capital of Germany. The city, in

its third year of unification following the crumbling of The Wall, was host again late this summer to the biennial Internationale Funkausstellung, welcoming the world's consumer electronics industry, and the public, for a high-energy, 10-day fair.

Funkausstellung, the world's largest video fair, is known for huge crowds (a half-million attendees), introductions of innovative products (from radio in the '20s to Minidisc in the '90s), and for a rich 70-year history that has accommodated keynote speakers ranging from Albert Einstein to Josef Goebbels.

This year's show was different. Stung by the worldwide recession, lackluster sales on the continent, sluggish progress toward a unified European market, and a resounding indifference to the HDTV systems showcased with so much fanfare at the 1992 Barcelona and Albertville Olympic Games, this year's exhibitors weren't offering many genuine new products. In fact, most of show's hot news revolved around technology already entrenched in the U.S. through products like VCR Plus and Dolby Pro-Logic receivers.

Nevertheless, with 740 exhibitors from 33 countries, there were intriguing displays of new products that will soon be gracing our shores, if they haven't already reached a store near you.

Televisions, including 16:9 sets (the one surviving feature of the fading European HD formats), were the keystones of virtually every large exhibit. And they were presented with a striking sense of the dramatic. Philips, for instance, gave visual artists a free hand to create radical video sculptures throughout its enormous display hall. One consisted of a video "waterwheel" made up of a score of TVs each displaying a waterfall for an

Showstoppers: Combining showmanship with innovative technology, Funkausstellung treated visitors to dancing cellular phones and a widescreen Sony HDTV (top), a spectacular array of Philips TVs (center), and a preview of Panasonic's 14-inch Flat Vision TV, now being introduced in Japan (bottom).



DIARY



erie wet-look effect.

Among the Euro tech displays were a number of interesting video developments. Sony introduced its first 16:9 set, a 32-inch direct view model with a suggested price equivalent to \$9,000.

Panasonic showed its Flat Vision television, a 14-inch screen based on parent company Matsushita's flat-panel technology that in this case produces a set less than four inches deep. At first glance, one might assume these are LCD units because of the thin profile, but the video principle is similar to the familiar cathode ray tube, giving the brightness and quality characteristics of a CRT.

However, Flat Vision technology uses electrostatic rather than magnetic deflection and divides the screen into nearly 10,000 individual screens using a separate electron beam source for each unit. Since each electron gun has only one tiny area to display, it can be dramatically shorter than the electron gun needed for a conventional TV tube. A conventional 14-inch TV uses a one-gun CRT more than a foot deep.

Flat Vision TVs are just going on sale in Japan at a price equivalent to \$2,700. Company spokesmen said Matsushita plans to develop larger Flat Vision sets and hopes to capture 10 percent of the worldwide display market by the end of the decade.

Sony made a big splash

Something for Everyone: Amstrad's 13-inch Miniset (top) satellite dish is designed for use on the road in RVs and campgrounds, while Nokia's Space Art dishes (center) lend a playfulness to satellite reception. The U.S. pavilion (left) competed for attention with exhibitors from 32 other countries.

with its HandyCam Snap, introduced simultaneously in the U.S. (see "New products"), while Sharp's ViewCam, which created a new kind of camcorder with its large LCD monitor, made its European debut. The audio side of the show was relatively quiet as Sony and Philips continued their debate over the relative merits of Minidisc and DCC as the portable format of the future.

Philips announced a new low-priced CD-I player that is expected to migrate to the U.S. this fall at \$399, down \$100 from its previous low suggested price. The company also demonstrated its full-motion video cartridge for CD-I, which it launched here and in Britain last month and which is scheduled for worldwide availability next year.

One of the hottest Funkausstellung displays was the German company Schneider's "Laser TV," which had crowds gawking at a 12-foot picture projected by a laser beam. Company spokesmen said that, while the technology is still under development, Schneider would like to turn it into a consumer product. But the Laser TV on display weighed over 1,000 pounds and

continued on page 96

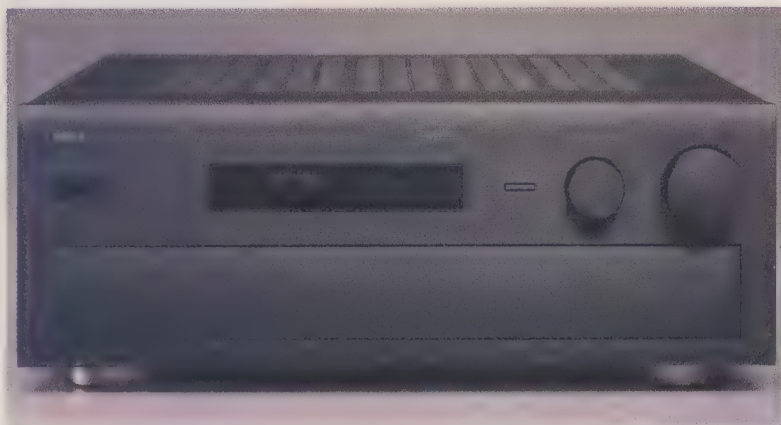
Trash Buster: BASF showed a new tape that it says can be completely recycled.



UNWRAPPED!



AUDIO/VIDEO GIFT GUIDE



YAMAHA'S CINEMA SOUNDS REAL GOOD

YEARS AGO, YAMAHA created DSP — Digital Sound Field Processing. Other manufacturers were quick to come up with "DSPs" of their own, calling them Digital Signal Processing. The difference is Yamaha's ability to measure and store complex sound field data of actual performance locations. Now, Yamaha has added a whole new dimension to home theater with their CINEMA DSP system, which multi-

plies Dolby Pro Logic by Digital Sound Field Processing and creates a much more real and dynamic surround sound.

You can find CINEMA DSP in Yamaha's powerful DSP-A2070 amplifier. The DSP-A2070 features 23 DSP programs; 11 CINEMA DSP modes and 12 Hi-Fi DSP programs to bring out the best in both your video and your audio-only sources. Movie lovers can enjoy hearing their favorite movies in a number of theater modes while audio lovers can hear their favorite bands at the best-sounding clubs, including New York's famed Village Gate and LA's Roxy Theater.

The DSP-A2070 is easy to set up with its clear and logical on-screen display that lets you control both the basic functions as well as the more advanced. You can even adjust eight different DSP Parameters including room size and reverberation time.

For more information on the DSP-A2070, use Reader Service card #130 or contact your local Yamaha dealer.

CANON'S STEADY SHOOTER

NOTHING IS MORE DISTRACTING to a home video viewer than the unnecessary jittering caused by camcorder movement. To eliminate this problem, Canon has succeeded in developing an optical image stabilization called Shake Absorber™. This system has been incorporated into two consumer camcorders: the ultra-compact UCS5 Hi8mm and the family-size E700 8mm camcorders.



Canon's optical image stabilization is different than electronic image stabilization. With optical image stabilization there is no degradation of image quality or reduction of field of view as in electronic image stabilization systems. Electronic image stabilization compensates for camcorder movement by enlarging the image so that the edges are no longer seen. Optical image stabilization utilizes a specially-designed Vari-Angle Prism, comprised of two glass elements joined by a flexible plastic material and separated by a Canon-developed silicon-based oil. Sensors detect horizontal and vertical movement and transmit the data to the prism actuator. The actuator adjusts the prism to the proper angle to refract light and compensate for hand tremors or external vibrations and deliver a smoother, more natural looking image.

Other features on the UCS5 include a 12X optical, 24X digital zoom lens, Hi-Fi stereo, and a 5-mode programmed auto exposure (AE) system. The E700 also features a 12X zoom lens as well as a pop-up video light and 3-mode programmed auto exposure.

For more information use Reader Service #131 or contact your local Canon dealer.

UNWRAPPED!

JVC BRINGS WIDESCREEN HOME

BRING THE BIG SCREEN into your living room with JVC's NV-55BX4 widescreen rear-projection television. Why settle for only a portion of a movie scene when you can see the whole thing the way the director intended when it was in the theaters. With the NV-55BX4 you get the full home theater experience and a whole lot more.

The NV-55BX4 can display pictures in four different modes: Regular, Panorama, Cinema, and Full. Regular mode lets you enjoy regular 4:3 images located in the middle of the 16:9 screen. JVC's unique Panorama mode increases the edges of a regular broadcast 4:3 picture to fill the entire 16:9 screen while the center image — where all the action takes place — remains unprocessed. Cinema mode zooms in on letterboxed movies, eliminating the distracting black borders and filling the entire screen with the film. Lastly, the Full mode expands "Squeeze" mode video from sources such as selected JVC camcorders.

In addition to the different screen options, the NV-55BX4 is packed with convenient features like Picture-In-Picture (PIP), Picture-Outside-Picture (POP), Theater Status, which automatically adjusts seven aspects of picture quality for a true cinema-like atmosphere, and a Dolby Pro Logic decoder. For more information on how to go wide, circle Reader Service #132 or contact your local JVC dealer.



DEFINITIVE'S BIPOLAR MIRACLE

ENTHUSIASTS AND WORLD RENOWNED experts acknowledge the dramatic sonic superiority of Definitive Technology loudspeakers for both the superb reproduction of music and the dramatic presentation of special effects and dialog for home theater. Definitive loudspeakers excel in build and construction quality, as well as all conventional criteria of excellence. However, one of Definitive's engineering breakthroughs in particular, Bipolar Technology, results in a level of performance so absolutely superior to that of conventional speakers that it has been called "a sonic miracle."

What is Definitive's Bipolar Technology and what are its sonic benefits? Basically, each Definitive bipolar loudspeaker (BP2, 8, 10, and 20) is two complete speakers in one. One set of drivers facing forward and another complete set faces to the rear. This provides the listener with an ideal lifelike balance of early arrival sonic information (which provides focus, clarity, and location data), and properly delayed late — arrival information (which conveys the lush three-dimensional soundstage of live music or cinematic experience). When you hear the Definitives for yourself, you will understand why *Video Magazine's* editors awarded Definitive's Bipolar Home Theater System the industry's most coveted award: the ViVA Gold Product of the Year.

For more information, use Reader Service #107.

THE GIFT OF GOLD

GOLD DISK'S VIDEODIRECTOR 1.0 belongs in the stocking of any burgeoning Spielberg on your gift list. VideoDirector is an inexpensive, easy-to-use editing program that lets you use any 386-based Windows PC to transform your videos into blockbusters.

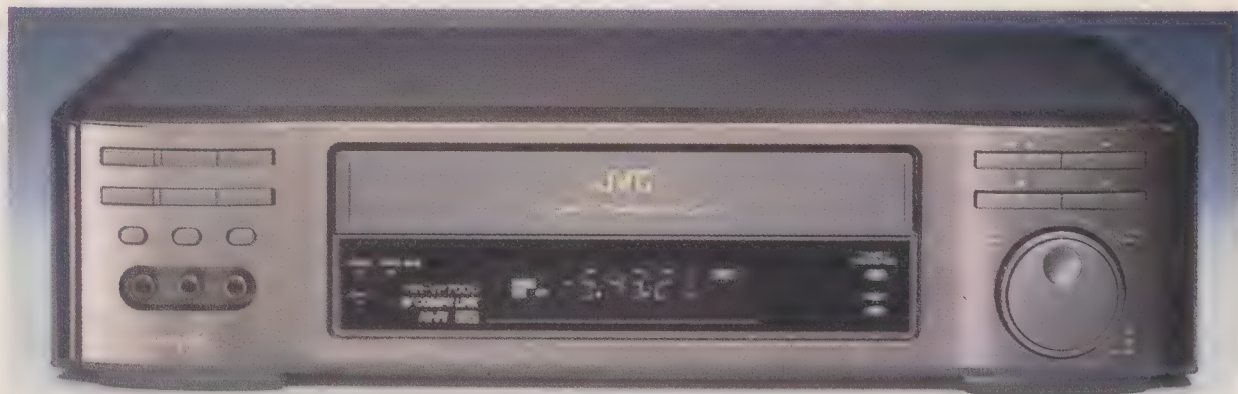
With a personal computer, a LANC (Control-L) compatible camcorder, and a VCR, VideoDirector lets you assemble the scenes you love in the order you want. Even better, you can leave all those unwanted scenes on the cutting room floor.

And you don't even have to be a computer programmer to use it — VideoDirector is operated with familiar VCR-style controls. Simply select your favorite clips from your source tape and use VideoDirector to arrange the clips in the desired order. That's all there is to it. VideoDirector includes a Smart Cable interface for controlling most popular VCR and camcorders through your PC.

To find out more, use Reader Service #133 or call 1-800-465-3375.



UNWRAPPED!



JVC's WELL-ROUNDED VCR

WHAT BETTER TO GET for the person that has everything than the VCR that does everything — JVC's HR-VP700 Hi-Fi VCR. The HR-VP700 is loaded with advanced features and easy-to-use functions. For starters, there's Hi-Fi VHS stereo with Hyper-Bass sound, which lets this unit fit perfectly into any home theater set up. And if your system is equipped with AV Compu Link, like the HR-VP700, all you have to do is insert a videotape and all the appropriate system components turn on and set-up automatically. If you think that's easy, this versatile VCR is also equipped with the user-friendly VCR Plus+ system and a multi-system cable-box controller.

JVC has even taken measures to improve the user's videos after they are recorded by including Random Assemble Editing (also called Video Album Maker, since it allows rearranging and elimination of scenes after they are recorded, very similar to the way one would put together a photo album — selecting only the best shots and in any desired order). Random Assemble Editing rearranges up to eight scenes in any order desired with just a few simple touches of the keys on the front of the HR-VP700. With the purchase of the optional RM-V403 remote control unit, multi-brand editing is possible, allowing the use of another VCR already in the home, even if it is not a JVC. And as if all this is not enough, JVC has also included a flying erase head for glitch-free scene transitions and a Family Message Center so that messages can be left for family members right on the television. Random Assemble Editing is also a standard feature on four of the new JVC camcorders.

For more information, circle Reader Service #134 or contact JVC at 41 Slater Drive, Elmwood Park, NJ 07407.

VIDEOGRAPHY OR KARAOKE: AZDEN WIRELESS

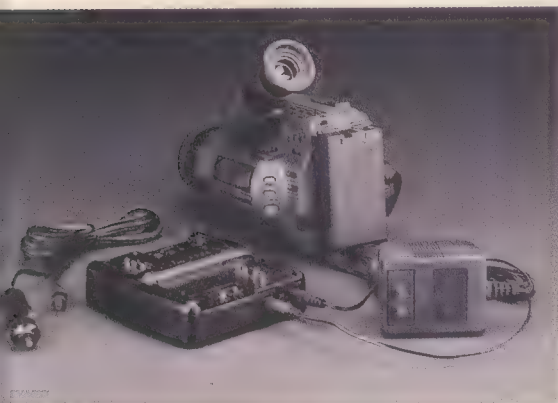
THE AZDEN WHX-PRO VHF handheld wireless mic system is a great add-on product for your camcorder and an easy way to make your karaoke system wire-free!

The professional quality handheld microphone has the transmitter built into the handle. It has two switchable channels (169.445 MHz and 170.245 MHz), so that you can choose the clearest sound. The microphone also has a mute switch so that you can silently pass it around. The miniature receiver has a telescoping swivel antenna that attaches to a camcorder with either the shoe mount or the supplied velcro, or you can plug the receiver into your karaoke system using the supplied phone plug adapter. Suggested retail is \$275.

For more information, circle Reader Service #135 or contact your local Azden dealer.



UNWRAPPED!



ALL THE POWER YOU NEED

WITH THE HOLIDAYS approaching, chances are your camcorder is going to be working overtime, so you better have plenty of power handy. That's where Lenmar comes in. Lenmar is introducing the model BCR262 OmniCharge Plus, which is an AC/DC battery charger, reconditioner, tester, and power supply for most 8mm and VHS-C camcorder batteries. The OmniCharge Plus will rapidly charge/discharge one or two camcorder batteries practically anywhere — at home or on the road.

What makes the BCR262 particularly unique is that it also includes a multi-battery housing plate that attaches to and powers Sony, Panasonic, JVC, Sharp, Hitachi, RCA, and other 6V camcorders through AC or DC power. Other features include a "Rapid Charge Only" feature (no discharge) for NoMEM™ batteries, automatic shutoff to prevent overcharging, and a four-level LED battery capacity tester. The BCR262 is UL listed.

The suggested list price is \$99.95. For more information circle Reader Service #136 or contact Lenmar at 800-424-2703 for a dealer in your area.

SEVENTH HEAVEN

PROBABLY THE BIGGEST innovation to come along in the music industry was the introduction of the compact disc. Nakamichi took this innovation and



added to it one of its own — the MusicBank™ Mechanism, which offered CD lovers improved ease of use and greater convenience. Now Nakamichi has introduced their second generation MusicBank Mechanism, and it is sure to make it on every audiophile's wish list this season.

Nakamichi's new MB-4s 7-disc MusicBank CD player features this improved mechanism that offers a significantly faster disc-change time and a smaller size compared to the original MusicBank. It also has fewer moving parts. What this adds up to is better performance and improved sound quality.

In addition to the downsized mechanism, the MB-4s also features seven direct access keys, a disc calendar to instantly select any disc, random play, and a high-performance low-pass analog filter stage.

For more information, use Reader Service #137 or contact your local Nakamichi dealer.

HOME THEATER CENTRAL

ALL OF THE SPEAKERS in your home theater system are important, but the most critical of these is the center channel speaker. This is because more than two-thirds of all the sound in today's movies come through this speaker. That is also why the quality of your entire home theater will be no better than the quality of this one speaker.

KEF understands the importance of the center channel speaker, which is why they make their Reference Series Model 90 and Model 100 with high-quality components and their Uni-Q Coincident Driver Technology. Uni-Q technology lets the speaker deliver superior sound over an area that is more than twice as wide as conventional speakers. This technology helps make the Model 90 and Model 100 ideal for all three front speaker locations when space is at a minimum.

KEF is the reference for high performance home theater. For more information, use Reader Service #138 or call 1-800-859-7232.



UNWRAPPED!



THE WIRELESS NADY ADVANTAGE

THE IDEAL GIFT for your favorite videographer this season is Nady's 551 VR professional ultra-compact two-channel video microphone system. Nothing is more frustrating than watching important events that you've taken the time to get down on tape and finding that the audio isn't up to par. That will no longer be a problem with the 551 VR, which features two user-selectable VHF operating frequencies that virtually assure you of getting a clear channel to record on.

The 551 VR's receiver uses Surface Mount Technology (SMT) that lets the receiver case be designed smaller than previous models, so the unit is easily portable. But that's not all — Nady's mic system uses a specialized companding noise reduction circuit that removes background hiss and distortion.

If that's not enough, the 551 VR includes Nady's latest mics — the HT-10, which is a rugged handheld mic, and the SX-30, a lavalier mic great for concealed recording.

With the Nady 551 VR, you'll find you never realized how good your videos could sound. For more information use Reader Service #139 or contact your local Nady dealer.

THE SHARP SOLUTION

AS THE HOLIDAYS roll around, it's easy to see how being the family videographer can be a lonely job. Seeing the world through squinting eyes and a tiny camcorder viewfinder separates you from the event you are recording. Sharp has a solution for this problem — the VL-E30U Sharp VIEWCAM. The VL-E30U incorporates a large full-color 3-inch LCD view screen that gives you the ability to see what you are recording and still be a part of the action.

With the VIEWCAM, you can rotate the lens up to 270 degrees. This makes it easy to record over people's heads during parades or sporting events, or get low angles without bending down. And by rotating the viewfinder 180 degrees, even the camcorder operator can be included in family videos.

Not only does the VL-E30U VIEWCAM make it easy to videotape, it also makes it simple to view your footage. The 3-inch LCD viewscreen acts as a full-color monitor to let you play back what's on tape — no matter where you are. Plus, the VL-E30U has a built-in speaker so you can hear what you've recorded.

For more information on how to become part of the action this holiday season, circle Reader Service #140 or contact your local Sharp dealer.



ONE MACHINE. INFINITE POSSIBILITIES.

FIRST CAME THE CD, then the LD, and now there's CD+G, Sega CD, and many others. Wouldn't it be great if there were one machine that could play all of these for-

mat and then some? Pioneer thinks so, that's why they are introducing the LaserActive multimedia system. LaserActive uses the high-quality audio and video associated with LaserDiscs combined with the high-density storage capacity of CD-ROMs to provide the most advanced, interactive entertainment machine on the market.

At the core of this system is the CLD-A100. The CLD-A100 is a combination compact disc/laserdisc player that has a port to accommodate optional control packs that are the heart of the system. Currently there are three packs that can be used with the CLD-A100. The first, the PAC-S10, was developed in conjunction with Sega Enterprises and enables the CLD-A100 to play 8- and 12-inch LaserActive Mega LD discs as well as existing CD+G discs and Sega CD and Genesis ROM cartridges. The next pack, the PAC-N10, was developed in conjunction with NEC Home Electronics and will let CLD-A100 users play 8- and 12-inch LaserActive LD-ROM² discs, CD+G discs, and Turbo Technologies' DuoSoft discs and cartridges. The final pack, the PAC-K1 makes the CLD-A100 compatible with the 200+ Pioneer LaserKaraoke discs.

There are tens of thousands of titles available for use with the LaserActive system. One thing is for sure — with the LaserActive system you will never be bored again. There are six titles available as of November: Pyramid Patrol (Mega LD); I Will (Mega LD); Econosaurus (LD-ROM²); The Great Pyramid (Mega LD); and Vajra (LD-ROM²).

For more information, use Reader Service #141.

UNWRAPPED!

THE ART OF SOUND

GIVE A GIFT that looks as good as it sounds — the Infinity MICRO II home theater speaker system. The MICRO II is a six-piece system that includes three satellite speakers for center and front channels (left and right), two surround speakers, and a subwoofer. The satellite speakers create the dynamics of a film soundtrack, as well as the ambiance and warmth of a live concert. The stylish satellites also have a low-profile mounting bracket that lets them be easily secured to virtually any surface and also allows the speakers to be positioned at the optimum angle for the truest sound reproduction. MICRO II satellites are magnetically shielded so they can be placed on or near the television without interfering with the video images.

But what is a home theater without the thunderous sounds emitted by the subwoofer? The MICRO II's subwoofer features dual 6.5" Polypropylene woofer drivers in a tuned enclosure that is designed to multiply driver output. The satellites and subwoofer have an attractive look that is functional as it is fashionable. Available in black or white, they are designed to integrate easily into any environment.

Designed to fit your budget and your gift-giving needs, Infinity's MICRO II is a superior home theater system for all seasons. For more information on this system or the others in Infinity's line, use Reader Service #142 or contact your local Infinity dealer.



SAMSUNG'S COOL COMBO

IF YOU'RE HAVING trouble deciding between a new VCR or television this season, why not get both? Samsung's CXB1924 combination monitor/VCR joins two of the most important pieces of a home entertainment system in one compact, economical unit. The CXB1924 is comprised of a sizeable 19-inch television monitor and a four-head VCR with HQ circuitry. Each component has all the features that one would desire in a dedicated unit, but because they are together in one model, all hook-up dilemmas are eliminated.

The EIA award winning combo's monitor features an 181-channel compatible tuner, on-screen channel, volume, and picture controls, and closed caption capabilities. The VCR end of the CXB1924 has variable speed slow-motion playback, noiseless still, eight-event/one-year programmability, one-touch recording, and on-screen display.

The CXB1924 also has front-panel audio/video jacks that allow easy camcorder playback and video game compatibility. For more extensive entertainment systems, there are additional inputs on the back of the unit.

The CXB1924 includes a sophisticated remote control that accesses both elements of the combination unit and is ideal as a second set in a bedroom. Or in a kid's room. The kitchen. A workroom. Even a weekend retreat. For more information, circle Reader Service #143 or contact your local Samsung dealer.

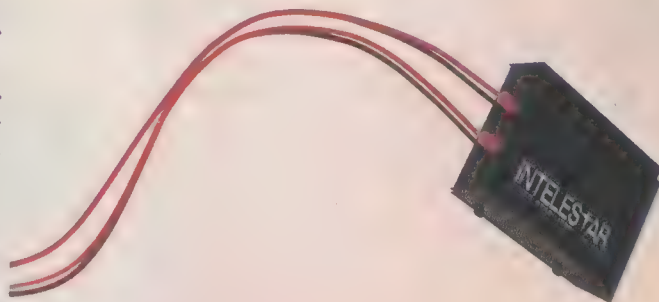
UNWRAPPED!

THE INTELESTAR DIFFERENCE

AN IDEAL GIFT for the video lover in your household is the INTELESTAR VS-400 video stabilizer from Vista International. The VS-400 will let you make copies from *all* pre-recorded VHS videotapes for your personal home use. More than half of all videotapes today are encoded with a copyguard protection scheme that prevents viewers from making copies of their own. The VS-400, however, automatically detects and minimizes the copyguard signal, allowing the user to enjoy their favorite VHS tapes whenever they want. Plus, it is 100 percent transparent and will not degrade the video signal of any tape.

The INTELESTAR VS-400 is completely automatic and as easy to set up as it is to use. Simply connect the VS-400 between the video-out jack of the play deck and the video-in jack of the record deck. That's all there is to it, and the INTELESTAR VS-400 is compatible with all televisions, monitors, and VHS VCRs. And don't worry about having to find another outlet to plug into — the VS-400 is powered by a 9-volt battery that will last up to two years. Vista International also offers the VS-500, which includes AC adaptor capability and LED indicator lights.

The INTELESTAR VS-400 has a suggested retail of \$59.95. For more information use Reader Service #144.



BOGEN'S SMOOTH OPERATOR

TAKE THE PRESSURE off of your favorite videographer this season with Bogen's 3169 Cine/Video Tripod. The 3169 takes the weight off of your shoulders and gives better stability than any in-camera system, giving your home video productions a more professional look.

The 3169 combines Bogen's 3001 Tripod Legs and their 3130 QR Micro Fluid head with Quick Release Plate. The tripod weighs around three pounds, but is extremely sturdy with its hard-finish aluminum legs. The fluid head allows for effortless panning and tilting, and the quick release plate makes it easy to remove the camera when handheld shooting better suits the situation.

For more information, use Reader Service #145 or contact your local Bogen dealer.

AN EVEN EASIER VCR PLUS+

THE NEW VCR PLUS+® Instant Programmer™ with CallSet™ is perfect for anyone who wants a fast, error-proof way to tape their favorite show.

To tape a show, simply punch in the VCR Plus+ numbers found in TV Guide or local TV listings. At the right time, VCR Plus+ automatically turns on your VCR, changes the channel (even on cable boxes), and records the program for you.

The new CallSet feature performs the initial set-up of your unit just by making one free phone call. The unit receives audio signals that teach it to work perfectly with your VCR and cable system.

Call 1-800-432-8271 or circle Reader Service #146 for more information.

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UNWRAPPED!

ULTIMATE

continued from page 68

(when handheld communicators become a reality).

The projects show the breadth of the video-related products and services being developed, as well as how traditional distinctions among industries have begun to blur. The engine of convergence is the transition from analog to digital technology. As computer memories increase and storage costs decrease, TV makers, computer firms, phone companies and cable operators are finding themselves deep into each other's territories.

Alarm bells go off at phone companies when word comes that cable operators are planning their own telephone services. The same is true when cable operators learn a local phone company is about to deliver video movies to homes. Broadcasters, who are losing over-the-air audiences, are desperately looking for new services to offer viewers. Newspapers worry that both the phone and the cable industries are moving into electronic publishing.

The uncertainty is prompting all

manner of alliance, many of which fall into well-defined categories. Some are mergers that help companies acquire capital for expansion. A good example is Time Warner's decision to sell a quarter of its movie studio assets for \$2.5 billion to US West, a regional telephone company. Time Warner has earmarked \$1 billion of the US West investment to help construct a fiber-optic superhighway for two-way digital television.

The deal also reflects a growing appetite by phone companies for video-related projects. Bell Atlantic recently won a Federal court ruling permitting it to offer video programs over phone lines. It has several such projects underway, including one with Future Vision of America for a system serving 38,000 homes in Dover and Florham Townships, New Jersey, that can carry phone calls and 64 TV channels. Southwestern Bell, another regional phone company, is buying a pair of cable companies.

Several recent alliances revolve around technical standards. No one wants another format war, like the famous Beta/VHS duel, complicating life along the digital interstate. So former rivals are cooperating to develop stan-

dards each alliance hopes will be adopted at national or international levels.

For example, Tele-Communications, Inc. and Time Warner, the two largest cable operators in the country, are jointly developing open-architecture standards that would assure compatibility between cable equipment and the software that drives it. They hope the entire cable industry will accept the results of their effort. "Both of our companies are committed to transforming our cable systems into powerful networks that will deliver a broad array of services to homes and businesses," said TCI chief executive John Malone.

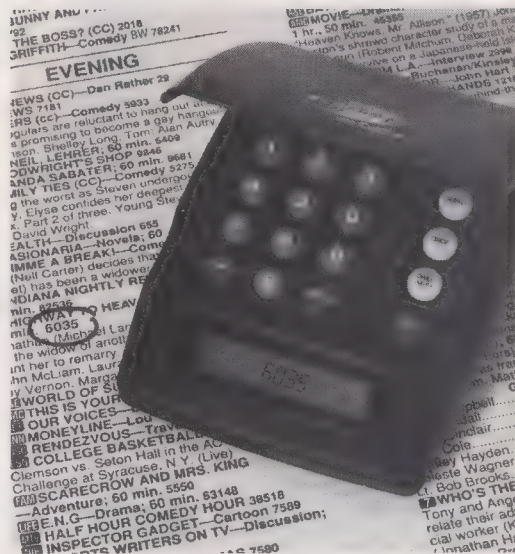
The same holds true for CD-ROM makers, who see a brighter future in creating standards that will allow any CD-size disc to play on any manufacturer's system. It would be a far cry from today's multiformat environment where more than a dozen varieties of CD-ROM compete. Even HDTV proponents, fierce competitors in past years, have been corralled by the sheer difficulty of their task and federal jawboning into a cooperative venture, dubbed the Grand Alliance, to create a single HDTV transmission standard for the U.S. ▶

THE MAKERS OF VCR PLUS+® BRING YOU ANOTHER PLUS.

Introducing the VCR Plus+® Instant Programmer™ with the new CallSet™ feature – a breakthrough technology that instantly performs the initial set-up of your VCR Plus+ unit right over the phone.

But that's not all. The CallSet unit still gives you all of the great features that have made VCR Plus+ the number one choice for VCR programming.

To tape a show, just punch in the PlusCode™ number from your TV listings. You can store up to 14 programs at a time.



VCR Plus+ will change the channels on your cable box. Now you can tape different shows on different channels without being home.

VCR Plus+ makes taping fast and easy. That's why the world's major VCR makers have adopted the VCR Plus+ taping system.

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Circle 18 on Reader Service Card.

At least three important partnerships focus on creating the onscreen navigating systems that will let viewers find their way around future TV systems. Simple remote controls will not let viewers properly command TV systems with a few hundred channels and exotic services, like instant ticket ordering for sports events. As a result, companies like IBM, Apple, Motorola, Time Warner and Intel are racing to develop elegant, sophisticated control systems for the extraordinarily complex video environments they and other firms are creating. Of course, whatever their sophistication, the navigating systems must be transparently simple to use.

Some top programmers are openly skeptical about the importance of greater channel capacity. "Those 500 channels are going to be reconfigured old channels," says HBO chairman Michael Fuchs. "There'll be eight HBOs, there will be 100 pay-per-view channels, and there'll be 10,000 shopping channels." Howard Stringer, president of the CBS Broadcast Group, thinks consumers already have more programs than they want. "If you didn't have to buy all the basic cable channels and could put your

money down on just the channels you want, the audience would buy about nine channels," says Stringer.

But aggressive entrepreneurs like Silicon Graphics, which has projects going with both Time Warner and Nintendo, hold the opposite opinion, and they're attempting to create every kind of new program under the sun. Interactive videogames, multimedia information services, electronic newspapers, home shopping services, and a myriad of special interest channels are well along the way.

All of which raises the issue of fragmentation. With so many programs competing for the same dollars from advertisers and consumers, production budgets are shrinking. "Who's going to pay the freight?" asks Lucie Salhany, chairwoman of the Fox Broadcasting Corp. "The networks aren't making it, the cable operators are buying rerun programming," she says. "Who's going to pay to fill 500 channels?"

Part of the answer may lie in an intriguing alliance between Brandon Tartikoff, formerly NBC's top programmer, and music producer Quincy Jones in New Orleans. The pair has teamed up to

produce TV programs for fractions of their usual cost by taking advantage of advanced video technology that network producers have overlooked. Their first project is *Bigtime TV*, a half-hour variety show pilot costing just \$68,000, which is about a third the cost such a program would typically run.

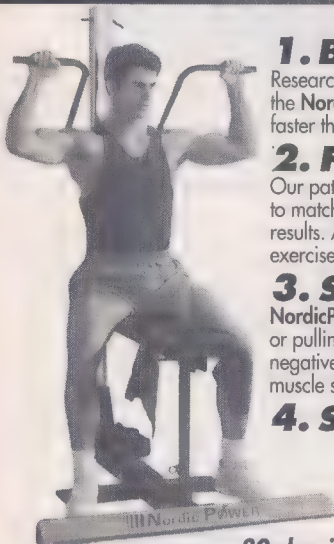
Apple Computer chairman John Sculley estimates that the convergence of media businesses will create the largest industry on Earth by the turn of the century, so it's no wonder companies are racing to set their strategies into motion. But some key voices fear digital technology may be moving too fast. Michael Eisner, chairman of the Walt Disney Company, worries about the social implications of a 500-channel universe, warning that an increasing number of Americans may choose to cocoon in front of TV sets rather than venture into the real world.

The emphasis on technology, rather than content, also bothers Peter Guber, chairman of Sony Pictures Entertainment. Guber says that for information to be meaningful it must be fused with emotion. "We cannot afford to lose contact with the audiences that are the heart and soul of our business," Guber said recently. "It is the story they are interested in, the words on the page and the magic of the creative impulse that elevates them to the screen."

But the story today is the digitally-driven convergence of advanced media technologies into an unfamiliar, very different kind of system. As Sherlock Holmes, veteran of an older sensibility, might have said, the game is afoot. ■

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*Comparison based on phone conversation with Soloflex representative, August 23, 1993 on Soloflex model #01050, plus two attachments (curl tube and dip bar) priced at \$995.00. ** Shipping and handling and applicable tax will be added to first payment.

TECH TIP

Remote repair

Most remote controls require increasing amounts of pressure on the buttons as they get old. Many of these remotes have a one-piece molded rubber keyboard with a conductive coating that gradually loses its effectiveness. The conductivity can be restored by painting the key backs with the stuff used to repair auto rear-window defrosters, which can be purchased in auto parts stores.

Be careful when you disassemble the remote, though. Most of them snap apart, but it takes care, patience and a gentle hand not to break the plastic. Usually, the best way to remove the back is by prying it off from the inside of the battery compartment.

Jeff Hamilton
Beaver, Pennsylvania

Circle 19 on Reader Service Card.



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PD-TM2 CD

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Hi8 GUIDE

continued from page 78

You can write your titles on paper, set them with your computer, or spray paint them on billboards. To capture them, you just hit a memory button that stores the title. At this point, you usually have a choice of colors and the opportunity to reverse the title so action is seen through the letters.

ONE-OF-A-KIND CAMS

Some Hi8 models have unique features that merit special consideration. Canon's workhorse L1 is one such model. The first consumer camcorder to offer interchangeable lenses, the L1 is a familiar sight at weddings, graduations and the like. It's a sturdy, somewhat heavy camcorder that packs some weighty features like overlapping (shared by Canon's A1 Digital and UCS3), which is equivalent to a dissolve. An adapter is also available that allows the L1 to use the EOS lenses from Canon's 35mm cameras.

Sharp's VL-HL100U ViewCam features a four-inch color LCD screen in

place of the traditional viewfinder, an innovation that is already bringing in a new camcorder era. The ViewCam includes digital effects like strobe and still, as well as electronic image stabilization. Its built-in speaker and LCD display allow it to double as a portable TVCR.

Another trailblazing model is Sony's VX3, the first, and still only, consumer model to use three separate CCD chips for greater color accuracy. Three-chip camcorders had previously been seen only in the professional realm, and while the CCDs in the VX3 aren't as large as the CCDs in professional camcorders, there's no doubt that having a chip dedicated to each of the primary colors results in a better picture. It also has RC time code for frame-accurate editing, and for \$3,800 it should.

Sony TR-series camcorders have always been popular. The TR101's Steady Shot image stabilization is the best we've seen, and it's also found on equivalent Nikon and Ricoh models. The TR200 and the new TR500 (which replaces the TR300) are the smallest yet, in part because they use Sony's new lithium ion battery which is smaller and lighter than nickel cadmium batteries. They can be charged at any time without affecting

the battery's memory, and they can be charged while still inside the camcorder. These models also use the Handycam Station, which uses a special connector on the camcorder to send audio and video signals to a monitor.

Hitachi's VM-H39A, VM-H38A and RCA's Pro883HB have a unique digital coloring feature that gives a monochrome or sepia-tone effect to imitate the look of films from the silent era. Their flat design caused waves when introduced, as did the flat design of Canon's UC-series.

Models now out of production, but perhaps still available in some stores include Minolta's Pro 8-918 with a two-chip CCD; Yashica's KX-V1U and KX-V10U, which are similar to Sony's TR200 and TR300 models; Sharp's VL-HX10U TwinCam, which has a fixed wide-angle lens and a variable zoom lens; and Sony's CCD-TR81.

There is no better advice for the camcorder shopper than the old scout motto "Be prepared." The chances are great you'll know more about the camcorders in question than the sales clerk, and a confident purchase is a good purchase. Use this guide as your starting point to make your purchase a winner. ■



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* Extra Battery
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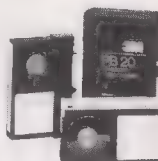
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DIARY

continued from page 82

cost about \$60,000, so it's a long way
from finding its way into living rooms.

BASF Magnetics on its home
ground emphasized the recyclability of
its video and audio tapes. All BASF
cassettes are now fully recyclable, a
company spokesman said, meaning that
each of the 28 parts in a typical video-
cassette can be used to produce new
cassettes.

For the second consecutive show,
American companies had a special place
to display their wares in the USA Pavil-
ion sponsored by the Electronic Indus-
tries Association Consumer Electronics
Group. Included among the 23 U.S.
manufacturers at the pavilion were Vir-
tual Vision, maker of the Sport sun-
glasses-like TV receiver, which again
proved to be an aisle-clogging traffic
stopper; Videonics, maker of the
Thumbs Up controller and other video
editing components; and Ambico, an
A/V accessory specialist.

The German subsidiary of Britain's
Amstrad company showed a Funai-built
dual-well VHS VCR. An Amstrad
spokesman said the company was inves-
tigating marketing an NTSC version in
the U.S. Amstrad also showed a Porta-
ble Miniset satellite receiver designed, it
said, for "those who would like to re-
ceive satellite broadcasts while camping
or spending the weekend away from
home." A 13-inch antenna option for
two of the company's satellite receivers,
the \$500 Miniset comes with a suction-
cup or clip mount and four feet of coax
cable in a carrying case.

Paris-based Thomson, which mar-
kets RCA, GE and ProScan brands in
the U.S., is a European giant as well,
with Telefunken, Nordmende, Saba,
Ferguson and Thomson brands filling
different marketing niches in various
countries. A highlight of the Telefunken
exhibit was a 32-inch widescreen direct-
view set with a built-in Dolby Pro-Logic
decoder. Dolby is just beginning to gain
a foothold in Europe as a feature for TVs
rather than separate components, as is
often the case here in the U.S.

Gemstar's VCR Plus also made a
huge splash at the show. Rechristened as
Show View, it is just being introduced in
Europe with great fanfare by virtually
every television and VCR supplier. The
enthusiastic welcome for VCR Plus is
another indication that people around
the world are more alike than different.
Everywhere, it seems, folks have trouble
programming their VCRs.

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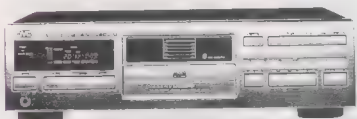
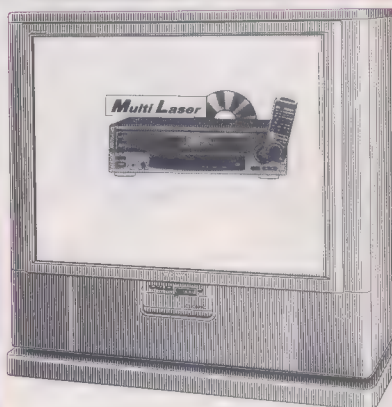
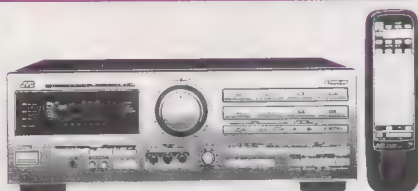
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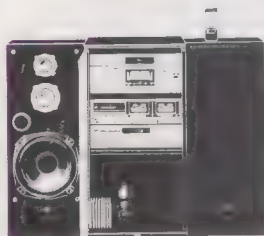
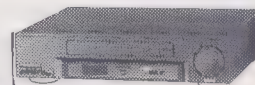
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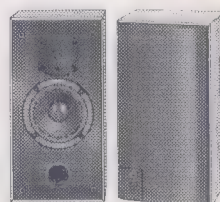
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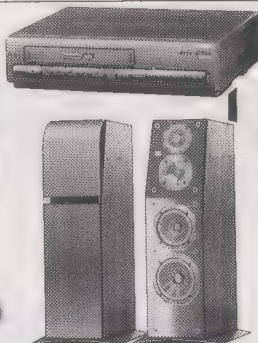
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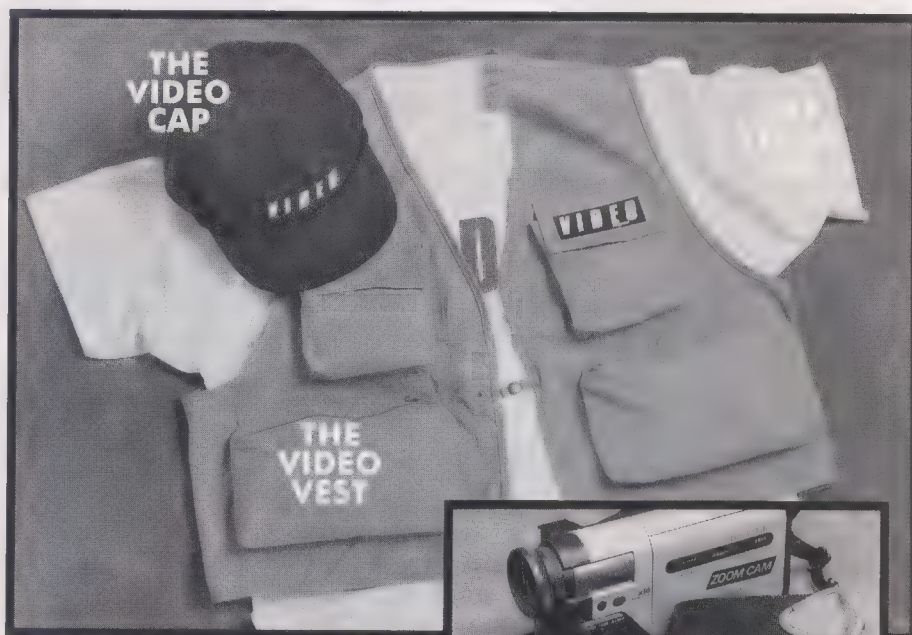
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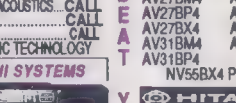
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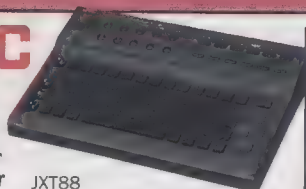
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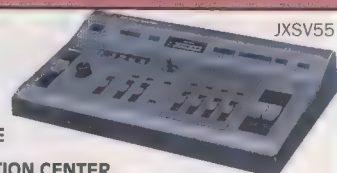
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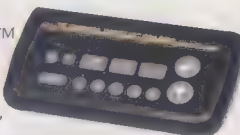
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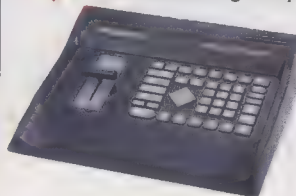


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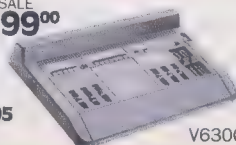
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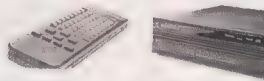


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- Hi8/S-VHS jacks • Color titling w/scrolling
- Color graphics and wipes
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Improves picture quality during playback or editing from any source.

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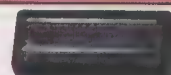
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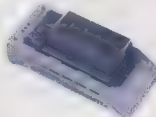


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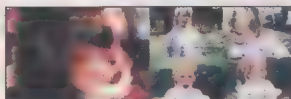
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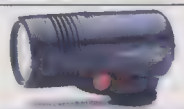
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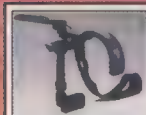
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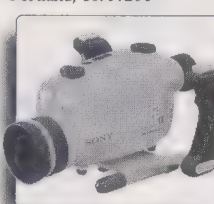


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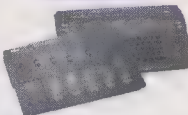
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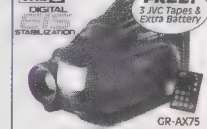
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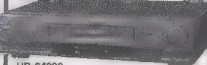
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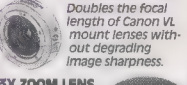
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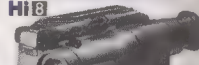
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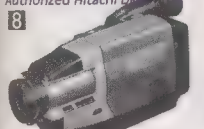
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VM-H38A Hi-Band
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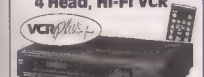
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VT-M272A VCR Plus+
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VT-F462A Flying Erase Head
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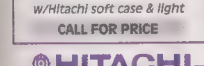
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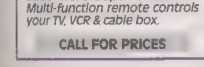
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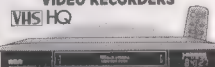
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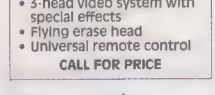
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VR-501 4 Head
VR-526A Built-In VCR+
VR-601HF 4 Head Hi-Fi
VR-68HF Front A/V
VR-662HF 4 Head Hi-Fi
VR-664HF Built-In VCR++
VR-667HF Hi-Fi, VCR++
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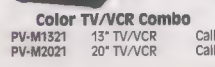
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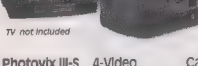
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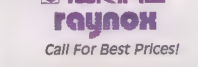
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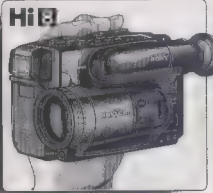
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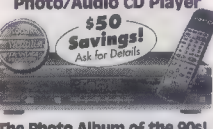
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- DIGITAL SUPERIMPOSER
- DIGITAL FADER
- RC TIME CODE

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TR-200

FEATURES:

- QUICK AUTOFOCUS
- HANDYCAM STATION
- READYCHARGE SYSTEM
- 3 MODE PROGRAM AE
- HI-FI STEREO SOUND
- 8:1 ZOOM
- DUAL BATTERY CHARGING SYSTEM

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FEATURES:

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- DIGITAL COLOR NOISE REDUCTION
- BUILT-IN NEUTRAL DENSITY FILTER
- 12:1 ZOOM
- 2 PAGE DIGITAL SUPERIMPOSER
- RC TIME CODE

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NEW



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FEATURES:

- 2 LUX MINIMUM ILLUMINATION
- 3-MODE PROGRAM AE
- DIGITAL FADER
- TILT-UP SPORTS VIEWFINDER
- WIRELESS REMOTE

TR-91

FEATURES:

- HI-FI STEREO
- COLOR VIEWFINDER
- 10 x 1 ZOOM
- DIGITAL SUPERIMPOSER
- STEADYSHOT FOCUSING



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TR-61

FEATURES:

- 10:1 VARIABLE ZOOM
- BUILT-IN WIDE ANGLE
- 4-MODE PROGRAM AE
- WIRELESS REMOTE



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- 10:1 ZOOM
- DIGITAL SUPERIMPOSER
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R-16

FEATURES:

- 10:1 VARIABLE ZOOM
- BUILT-IN WIDE ANGLE
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- WIRELESS REMOTE

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VMH-38A

FEATURES:

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- DIGITAL EIS
- SPECIAL EFFECTS
- HIGH-SPEED SHUTTER



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VMH-39A

FEATURES:

- 64x ZOOM
- 2 LUX
- DIGITAL EIS
- SPECIAL EFFECTS
- HIGH-SPEED SHUTTER



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VM-E55A

FEATURES:

- 16 x 1 ZOOM
- DIGITAL EIS FADE
- 1 LUX
- TTL FOCUSING
- MULTIBRAND REMOTE
- FLYING ERASE HEAD



IMAGE STABILIZER

VM-E53A

FEATURES:

- 16 x 1 ZOOM
- PROGRAM AE
- 1 LUX
- TTL FOCUSING
- MULTIBRAND REMOTE
- FLYING ERASE HEAD



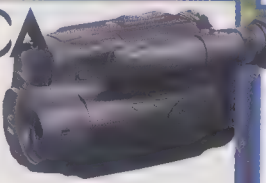
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KX-V35

FEATURES:

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- BUILT-IN WIDE ANGLE
- 4-MODE PROGRAM AE
- WIRELESS REMOTE



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VL-E30

FEATURES:

- 8:1 ZOOM
- 3" LCD COLOR
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- DIGITAL EFFECTS
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UC-S5

- FEATURES:
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 - 1/10,000 SHUTTER
 - OPTICAL STABILIZATION



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UC-S3 DIGITAL EFFECTS

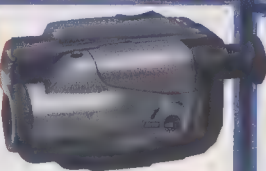
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- MAIN POWER ON/OFF
- BEEP ANNOUNCEMENT
- START/STOP RECORD
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 - VHS-C
 - HI-FI STEREO
 - 1 LUX
 - VIDEO LIGHT



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PV-IQ403

- FEATURES:
- 10 x 1 ZOOM
 - VHS-C
 - 1 LUX
 - VIDEO LIGHT



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PV-IQ303

- FEATURES:
- 10 x 1 ZOOM
 - VHS-C
 - 1 LUX
 - VIDEO LIGHT



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PV-53

- FEATURES:
- 20 x 1 ZOOM
 - VHS-C
 - 1 LUX
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PV-43

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 - 1 LUX
 - IMAGE STABILIZATION
 - COLOR DIGITAL FADE



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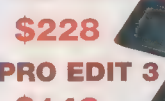
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PRO EDIT 4



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PRO EDIT 3



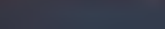
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PRO-EDIT 1



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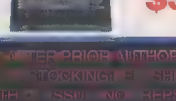
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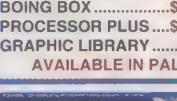
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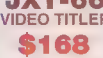
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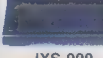
JVC

JXT-66



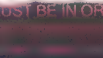
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JXS-V55

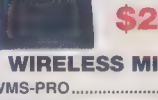


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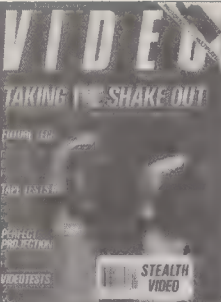
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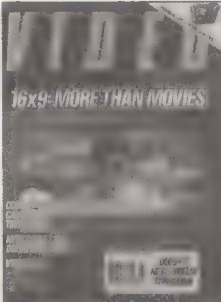
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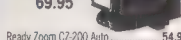
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TAPES & DISCS

N E W R E L E A S E S

FEATURE FILMS

Indecent Proposal

1993. Robert Redford, Demi Moore, Woody Harrelson; dir. Adrian Lyne. Hi-fi surround, cc. (R) 119 min. priced for rental. LD letterboxed or pan-and-scan \$34.95. Paramount.

By now, everyone knows about the proposal in Adrian Lyne's Faustian romantic fantasy—\$1 million for a night with Demi Moore—but there's more to *Indecent Proposal*, both good and bad, than that headline-grabbing gimmick. The story takes many predictable turns as it follows a variation on an old formula: boy gets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl. The big mystery is, which boy?

The clichéd script is full of melodramatic lines ("I was desperate—we stood to lose everything"), sugary images and mechanical situations. Director Lyne's style alternates between the mundane (talking heads debating plot points) and the arty (slickly edited montages of people, places and things), while the movie itself is just as schizophrenic. Clunky and ponderous, it leads up to a fascinating finale in which both Redford and Woody Harrelson—miscast as a brilliant architect—make gestures of noble self-sacrifice worthy of *Mildred Pierce*.

Ultimately, however, the problem is not the story itself but the script's choice of emphasis. Although stick figures Moore and Harrelson are the nominal protagonists, Redford's character is so much more intriguing—a melancholy money man looking to regain his youthful vision of true love—that you soon start rooting for him, and hoping to learn more about his story, his life, his dreams. In fact, that might have been a great picture. As it is, the movie is hardly indecent, just half-baked.

—Tom Soter



Three of Hearts

1993. Kelly Lynch, Sherilyn Fenn, Billy Baldwin; dir. Yurek Bogayevicz. Hi-fi surround. (R) 105 min. priced for rental. LD \$39.99. New Line.

For a romantic triangle involving a male hustler, a lesbian and her uncertain ex-lover, *Three of Hearts* is remarkably uncontroversial. Director Yurek Bogayevicz (*Anna*) neither promotes, condemns, nor exploits his characters' sexual proclivities in this off-center, enjoyable timewaster.

Lesbian Connie (Kelly Lynch) is heartbroken when her lover Ellen (Sherilyn Fenn), unsure if she's gay, straight, bi or what, ends their relationship. Connie meets Joe (William Baldwin), a male prostitute who brags he can seduce any woman, and they concoct a plan: Joe will romance Ellen and then dump her,

souring her on men forever. This is intended to send her back to Connie's waiting arms.

Lynch is a delight to watch—with her angular but expressive face, she's a natural clown and a born actress. Baldwin manages to be both cocky and appealing, not an easy combination to pull off. The chemistry between these two is the heart of the film, which is comparatively dreary in the scenes featuring the pretty but vacuous Fenn.

Three of Hearts is being tested for video with two different endings—the one seen in theaters, in which Joe and Connie remain friends after Ellen departs, and an alternate that unites Joe and Ellen. But the latter is so perfunctory and unsatisfying that video viewers will likely see the original ending. The laserdisc will include both endings.

—M. Faust

EDITOR'S CHOICE



kenneth korman

The Best Intentions

1992. Samuel Froler, Max von Sydow; wr. Ingmar Bergman, dir. Bille August. Hi-fi stereo, subtitled. (NR) 182 min. \$89.95. Academy Elite.

Ingmar Bergman's relationship with his parents was always difficult. As a teenager he openly rejected the strict moral influences of his father, a Lutheran pastor, and his mother, a nurse. It wasn't until later in life that Bergman began to look on them with a more open heart.

After a long rummage through his family's voluminous photo albums, Bergman wrote *The Best Intentions*, a semi-fictional account of his parents' courtship and the early years of their marriage.

The story begins in 1908. Henrik Bergman (Samuel Froler) is a divinity student whose rigorous principals don't assuage his baseless guilt and confusion. The pampered child of a well-to-do family, Anna Akerblom (Pernilla August) is spoiled and a bit of a snob. Class differences and the objections of Anna's mother (who, like everyone else in the film, commits painful acts with the "best intentions") are only the first burdens the mismatched couple struggle with in their effort to build a life together.

As directed by Bille August (*Pelle the Conqueror*), *The Best Intentions* is a masterpiece, a clear-eyed yet compassionate tale of two strong-willed people at odds with each other and the world. Winner of Best Picture and Best Actress awards at the Cannes Film Festival, this three-hour film makes for a perfectly satisfying evening's viewing. —MF

Til Death Do Us Part: Ingmar Bergman based *The Best Intentions* on his parents' life together.



Before the original *Star Wars* blazed into theaters in 1977, not even series creator George Lucas could have imagined the true "power of the force." His epic not only raised the ante for all ensuing special-effects movies, but utterly transformed Hollywood's filmmaking machinery. For better or (mostly) worse, the vast majority

of Tinseltown's resources are now devoted to big-budget "event movies."

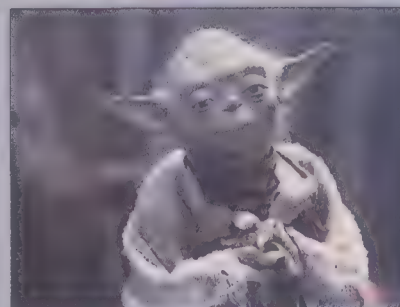
As a result of the series' impact, and because it happened to coincide with the dawn of the first home video era, *Star Wars*, *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980) and *Return of the Jedi* (1983) have long stood as the ultimate video artifacts. But with the nine-disc boxed set (\$250), the ante has been raised again. This is as good as it gets until HDTV arrives.

The THX-approved *Collection* easily establishes a new standard for picture and sound quality. All three movies now bear a visual richness on disc more reminiscent of film than video; gone are the shimmer and color noise of so many widescreen transfers. And the soundtracks have been completely remixed for this release, resulting in a perfect blend of dialog, music and effects. They're not just a showcase for state-of-the-art technology—the new audio tracks heighten the subjective experience of watching these splashy, engaging films.

If only the THX approval process included quality control of supplementary materials, the all-CAV *Collection* would be flawless. But its supplements here will prove a major disappointment for connoisseurs of the form. Each film includes an extra side with interviews and between 100 and 250 still frames—mostly behind-the-scenes photographs from the set of each movie—but none of it is truly interactive, or particularly insightful. The elegant mix of text, still frames and motion



Blasts From the Past: *Return of the Jedi* (top) and *The Empire Strikes Back*.



footage pioneered by Criterion is nowhere in sight.

Far worse, though, is the blown opportunity represented by the *Collection*'s misuse of the analog tracks. The best special-edition laserdiscs include running commentary from great filmmakers as they watch their films along with you. George Lucas pops up occasionally here, but mostly we get production esoterica from special-effects wizards Dennis Muren and Ken Ralston. And because the commentary is only sporadic, you must search for chapter cues like "Chewbacca design considerations."

A beautiful hardcover book called *George Lucas: The Creative Impulse*, also included, helps make amends for the supplements. Though perhaps a bit too laudatory for a work that necessarily explores movies like *Howard the Duck* and *Ewoks: The Battle For Endor*, the gorgeous photographs make this volume a very nice bonus. The set's \$250 price tag may sound high, but sold separately and without the extras, the three movies on disc total \$210. So don't be afraid to take the plunge—with pictures and sound of astonishing clarity, *The Definitive Collection* lives up to the name. ■



Big Shot:
A serial killer commands a media entourage in *Man Bites Dog*.

Man Bites Dog

1991. Andre Bonzel, Benoit Poelvoorde; dir. Remy Belvaux. Hi-fi mono. (NR) 96 min. \$89.95. Fox Lorber.

An unlikely mix of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* and *This is Spinal Tap*, *Man Bites Dog* is a blackly comic satire of modern media. It mates the lowest occupants of two ever-growing groups: people who will do anything to make a film, and those who will do anything to get in front of a camera.

A documentary crew is making a film about Benoit, a sociopathic serial killer. Benoit is hilariously egomaniacal as he explains his working methods, spouts sophomoric philosophy and atrocious poetry and pontificates about art, architecture and ornithology.

Despite Benoit's horrible crimes, the crew is enchanted by its subject. The ease with which they move from recording his atrocities to participating in them makes the movie's most cutting point, deflating the cherished but essentially false notion of "objective journalism." The film also turns the tables on viewers, easing us into Benoit's perspective for an hour before hitting us with a scene so ugly we're forced to confront our own voyeurism.

Man Bites Dog is available in both a "director's cut" and edited versions. In a reverse of the usual situation, however, the edited version is unrated; the complete cut bears an NC-17.

—MF

Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.

1993. Ariyan Johnson, Kevin Thigpen; wr./dir. Leslie Harris. Hi-fi stereo. (R) 96 min. \$92.98. LD \$34.95. LIVE.

Chantel is determined to make it. She gets As and Bs in school, earns good money at her part-time job, and plans to go to college and eventually become a doctor. No way will she end up a single mother with dim prospects, like so many other girls in her Brooklyn neighborhood. Of course, that's just what happens to this attractive, overconfident teen in *Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.* Writer-director Leslie Harris captures Chantel's brash energy without idealizing her, underscoring the enormity of the pitfalls awaiting a young black woman, even one possessing the drive to succeed.

In the title role, charismatic Ariyan Johnson dominates the spotlight like a future superstar, confiding in the camera and slinging insults at boyfriends with the same cocky grace. However,



Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.

everything else about this ambitious comedy-drama falls short. Most of Johnson's fellow players are wooden and amateurish, and the narrative loses its edge once Chantel confronts the prospect of parenthood. Numerous scenes of agonizing over whether to have the baby, plus an overlong, unconvincing birth, bring the film dangerously close to standard melodrama. Too bad—*Just Another Girl on the I.R.T.* could have been something special.

—JY

The Living End

1992. Craig Gilmore, Mike Dytri; wr./dir. Gregg Araki. Hi-fi stereo. (NR) 85 min. \$89.95. Academy Elite.

The romantic option of living fast and dying young is a balancing act ingrained in our culture. But what if you *know* you're going to die young? Does that fact automatically rev-up the speed of life to dangerous levels? After a leadenly goofy start, *The Living End* crystallizes this AIDS-era issue with a blend of cerebral black humor and nerve-wracking unpredictability.

Jon (Craig Gilmore) is a young yuppie recently informed of his HIV-positive status, Luke (Mike Dytri) is the young (and likewise infected) wildman who flags him down after pumping lead into a trio of would-be gay bashers. Despite Luke's propensity for violence, the two are drawn together by the unspoken reality of their future. A cross-California odyssey sees their relationship intensify until Jon finally sees himself dragged across the line that separates pure freedom from the absolute out-of-control. With *The Living End*, writer/director Gregg Araki has distilled the corrosive energy of "Generation X" into a powerful vision that's impossible to ignore.

—John Walker

Once Upon a Forest

1993. Anim. Dir. Charles Grosvenor. Hi-fi surround, cc. (G) 70 min. \$24.98. Fox-Video.

It's vital that kids learn to take care of our battered planet, but the animated feature *Once Upon a Forest* won't do much for the cause. This tepid ecological fable follows three young "furlings"—a mole, mouse and hedgehog—as they race against time to save a little badger left gravely ill by poison gas. Avoiding outright preaching, the Hanna-Barbera production depends

heavily on predictable adventure sequences, then tacks on a muddled "green" postscript likely to escape many youngsters.

Muddled message aside, the film boasts a few crudely effective moments. The furlings' battle with a sinister one-eyed owl should terrify smaller viewers, while even older kids may shudder at the way the film exploits fears of losing one's parents. Michael Crawford supplies the voice of a wise badger, singing one bleak song, and Ben Vereen plays a feathered preacher, mimicking a black country minister with a clichéd vigor that evokes "Amos 'n' Andy" days, undermining *Forest's* claims to enlightenment.

—JY



Wing and a Prayer: Once Upon a *Forest's* message of environmental awareness falls short of the mark.

Close to Eden

1992. Badema; dir. Nikita Mikhlov. Hi-fi stereo, subtitled. (PG) 109 min. priced for rental. Paramount.

In many ways, Gombo (Bayaertu) seems like a typical family man. This quiet shepherd works hard to provide for his wife and three kids. And next time he's in town, he intends to purchase a new TV, although he's reluctant to buy the condoms the missus has insisted upon. But *Close to Eden* is no ordinary farm tale: A Mongolian, Gombo follows the humble ways his ancestors practiced centuries before, but he's about to experience a major attack of future shock.



Green Grass at Home:
Close in *Eden's* land
of plenty.

In Russian with English subtitles, this droll comedy moves at a snail's pace, reflecting Gombo's simple world. Still-life scenes of the landscape go on forever, while extensive footage of a sheep slaughter belongs in a documentary. Fortunately, some amusing characters boost the tempo slightly. A drunken friend (Baoyinhexige) presents him with a Sylvester Stallone poster, claiming it's his American brother, while new pal Sergei (Vladimir Gostukhin), a hapless Russian truck driver, tries to help Gombo into the 20th century. The wittiest moment comes at the end. As the family sits in a simple hut watching George Bush on the tube, Grandma (Babushka) patiently pops the bubbles of the plastic wrap that encased the set—just like modern folks do. Not for everyone, but definitely different.

—JY

LASERDISCS

Charlie Chaplin: A Legacy of Laughter

B&W. *The Kid* (1921): Charles Chaplin, Jackie Coogan, Edna Purviance. *City Lights* (1931): Chaplin, Virginia Cherril. *The Great Dictator* (1940): Chaplin, Paulette Goddard, Jack Oakie. All wr./pr./dir. Chaplin. 68 min. (*Kid*), 87 min. (*Lights*), 127 min. (*Dictator*), plus supplements. *Dictator Sides 1 & 2* CLV, all others CAV. \$69.98 each. FoxVideo.

Charlie Chaplin's Little Tramp, the best-loved of all film characters, is a paradox: Woebegone, set upon and often homeless, he nonetheless fights for those less able to fend for themselves. This is the common thread linking these three very different classics, now available as part of FoxVideo's new "A Legacy of Laughter" Chaplin series. It's second nature for Charlie to raise an

abandoned child, or to get the blind flower girl her operation. In *The Great Dictator*, Chaplin's Jewish barber is simply another version of the Tramp, and he goes so far as to rescue humanity.

It's fascinating to view these films on a single weekend and see the different paths Chaplin took in pursuit of his vision. In *The Kid*, the slapstick is inseparable from its Victorian sentimentality; six-year-old Jackie Coogan proved almost as adept a clown as Chaplin, and the sequence in which Charlie rescues him from the dubious charity of the government (with which he had personal experience) is among the most passionate of his career. *City Lights* is a masterpiece, a succession of inspired, perfectly timed scenes that raise the simple story of the Tramp and the blind girl (Virginia Cherrill), with its daringly ambiguous ending, to the sublime.

The Great Dictator, Chaplin's first real "talkie," is more problematic. Tired routines alternate with inspired ones, and the wicked parodies of Hitler and Mussolini mix with hopeless naïveté. At the end, Chaplin steps out of character to deliver his famous "We think too much and feel too little" speech, an expression of pacifism at a time when the real Hitler already ruled most of Europe. Then again, his sense of humanity always outstripped his sense of events. His pictures are timeless rather than timely.

Fox's discs are digitally mastered from first-generation materials (Chaplin controlled his negatives and prints), though it's distressing to see fading in some spots in *Dictator*. All the sets include documents showing Chaplin's methods of creating movies and doing business. *The Kid* also comes with the 1918 three-reeler *A Dog's Life*. Best of all is *City Lights*, beautifully transferred and with Chaplin's score and sound effects digitally re-recorded by Carl Davis, which adds immeasurably to viewing en-



Child's Play:
Charlie Chaplin is the
Little Tramp, but Jack-
ie Coogan is *The Kid*.

joyment. Two later Chaplin films, the daring but failed black comedy *Monsieur Verdoux* (1947) and the unabashedly sentimental *Limelight* (1952), have also been released recently by Fox on special-edition discs. —Sol Louis Siegel

LA Journal

1993. Pr. Mark C. Brems. Digital stereo with analog music and narration tracks, (NR) \$24.95. 2 sides CAV. 8-inch laser-disc. Voyager.

Despite its (mostly) undeserved reputation as La-La Land, Los Angeles is probably the most complex city on earth. No single documentary would

stand a chance of capturing L.A.'s diversity and contradictions, but this unique disc from Voyager comes about as close as you can get without the smog.

Utilizing a technique the producer calls "pixilated photojournalism," *LA Journal* flashes some 20,000 stills and historical clips across the screen, a manic montage of past and present that somehow manages to convey the flavor of this kaleidoscopic metropolis. Chapter stops let you catch your breath and study the images at leisure, but the piece isn't nearly as much fun that way—you're supposed to be overwhelmed.

Sound is as important as sight to this documentary, and there's plenty of it here. MIDI composer Carl Stone provides an appropriately percolated score on the digital tracks. On analog-track one, there are spoken-word performances curated by the impresario of L.A.'s poetry scene, Harvey Kubernik. Analog-track two features archival recordings of Native American, Creole and Latino songs. This disc is meant to be played and enjoyed in a variety of ways.

Careening crazily from pathos to kitsch, gravity to frivolity and entertainment to art, *LA Journal* is the perfect portrait of its subject.

—Ron Goldberg

On the Beach

1959. B&W. Gregory Peck, Ava Gardner, Fred Astaire, Anthony Perkins; dir. Stanley Kramer. Digital mono, letterboxed. (NR) 134 min. CAV side 3. MGM/Image.

Director Stanley Kramer made a name for himself with liberal "problem" pictures—his *The Defiant Ones* explored prejudice—but none faced a bigger problem than *On the Beach*, his heart-wrenching saga of the end of the world. The movie, based on Nevil Shute's novel, depicts the survivors of nuclear war as they wait in Australia for the radiation to drift south and kill them. Unlike most other disaster epics, Kramer's avoids glitzy special effects to focus on the mundane moments of life—feeding a baby, going on a date—that become powerfully poignant because they might be the last time the characters do them. Ever.

The players are effective if occasionally miscast—Americans Fred Astaire, Anthony Perkins and Ava Gardner all turn up with phony Australian accents. Perfect, however, is Gregory Peck as a

stolid American submarine commander who—in a moving monologue—can't quite acknowledge that his wife, two kids and dreams for their future are gone. *On the Beach* is a bleak tear-jerker with an unrelenting antiwar message. Don't miss it, but bring plenty of hankies. (The movie is presented in an excellent letterboxed transfer with only occasional film glitches.) —TS



Judgement Day: (From left) Anthony Perkins, Gregory Peck and Fred Astaire in *On the Beach*.

Enter the Dragon

1973. Bruce Lee, John Saxon, Jim Kelly; dir. Robert Clouse. Digital mono, letterboxed. (R) 99 min. CLV 2 sides. \$34.98. Warner.

Bruce Lee: The Curse of the Dragon

1993. B&W/color, dir. Fred Weintraub, Tom Kuhn. Digital stereo. (NR) 88 min. CLV 2 sides. \$34.98. Warner.

Bruce Lee, who died under mysterious circumstances 20 years ago, is idolized for his amazing martial-arts expertise—not his films. Fast-forward through *Enter the Dragon* when the magnetic Lee is not on screen and spare yourself the plodding narrative: An agent (Lee) joins other fighters in a tournament run by a nefarious gangster dealing in drugs and women. Just how his empire works is never explained, but no matter. Asked only to gather evidence, Lee winds up decimating the bad guy's kung-fu army with one lightning-fast blow after another.

As the first kung-fu movie produced by a major studio, *Enter the Dragon* has high production values for its genre but is carelessly edited. The digital transfer is unremarkable, and the widescreen treatment only underscores the pedestri-



Best Foot Forward:

Bruce Lee (left) confronts another foe in *Enter the Dragon*.

an shot composition and confined staging of the action.

Far more interesting is *Bruce Lee: The Curse of the Dragon*, Lee's life story as narrated by George Takai of *Star Trek* fame and produced by Fred Weintraub, one of the men behind *Enter the Dragon*. Interviews with co-workers, family and friends (including a brother, James Coburn, Chuck Norris, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and son Brandon Lee) reveal a complex, intense man who craved stardom and may have been undone by it. His sudden death—a drug reaction that the family still insists was actually a murder—is given close scrutiny and considered from many viewpoints. Plentiful film excerpts, screen-test footage and family photos provide visual interest and will fascinate Lee admirers. The documentary is so recent, it also encompasses Brandon Lee's death on a movie set this year and notes parallels to the fate of his legendary father. —Andy Wickstrom

Beneath the 12-Mile Reef

1953. Robert Wagner, Gilbert Roland, Terry Moore, Richard Boone; dir. Robert D. Webb. Digital stereo, letterboxed. (NR) 102 min. \$34.95. Lumivision.

Beneath the 12-Mile Reef is the first public domain movie ever released on video in letterboxed form. This rather routine 20-Century Fox drama, about ri-

val sponge-fishing families led by Gilbert Roland and Richard Boone, has been beautifully transferred from an original British Eastmancolor print that has retained its depth and luster with only the slightest reddening. The real "stars" are Edward Cronjager's dazzling underwater photography (the first in CinemaScope), which made full use of Eastmancolor's range of blues, and Bernard Herrmann's score (his first in stereo). The latter is a rich mix of memorable melodic passages and stunning orchestrations (including nine harps), much of which may be most familiar for its subsequent use in *Lost In Space*.

—Bruce Eder

Red River

1948. B&W. John Wayne, Montgomery Clift, Walter Brennan; dir. Howard Hawks. Digital mono. (NR) 133 min. 3 sides CLV. \$39.95. MGM/UA.

King of Kings

1961. Robert Ryan; dir. Nicholas Ray. Digital stereo, letterboxed. (NR) 170 min. 3 sides CLV. \$39.95. MGM/UA.

Red River's re-release is a major video event, offering up a must-own edition of one of the finest westerns ever made. The new disc's rich black-and-white image is a match for the best theatrical showings, and the soundtrack—sparked by crackling Hawksian dialog and a driving Dimitri Tiomkin score—booms out splendidly, marred only by a few unexpected volume-drops. Even the textures of sunlight and clouds in the background are worth repeat viewing, and the once-obscure night scenes glisten in razor-sharp detail. Best of all, John Wayne became a real actor for *Red River*, playing a powerful but almost fatally misguided cattleman. He's ably supported by a cast that turns in uniformly note-perfect performances.

King of Kings is a less important re-

lease, but another much-improved disc. It boasts fine color and detail and a full-sounding audio track that includes the restored Overture. Director Nicholas Ray, best known for serious dramas like *Rebel Without a Cause*, was not well-suited to handle religious epics: *King of Kings* is a big, sweeping mess that barely hangs together under Orson Welles' narration (written by Ray Bradbury) and Miklos Rozsa's score. But this interpretation of the life of Jesus succeeds in small, intimate scenes and careful portrayals: Robert Ryan's John The Baptist, Siobhan McKenna's Mary and Jeffrey Hunter's Jesus are all memorable, and their scenes make the movie worthwhile.

—BE

CLASSICS

The Return of the Pink Panther

1975. Peter Sellers, Christopher Plummer; dir. Blake Edwards. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (G) 113 min. \$14.98. FHE.

This good-natured live-action cartoon returned Peter Sellers to the role of bumbling Inspector Clouseau after a nine-year absence. Re-issued to coincide with the new theatrical *Son of the Pink Panther*, the older film finds the original Clouseau up to his old tricks: tripping over chairs, smashing through tables and generally wreaking havoc wherever he goes in the kind of shtick that was old when Laurel and Hardy were young. It doesn't matter: Clouseau is a vaudeville comedy classic, one who survives despite his mangled English, his hopeless pomposity and his incredible ineptitude.

Director Blake Edwards has fun staging the bits, which include two different vehicles crashing into a swimming pool and Clouseau struggling with an out-of-control vacuum cleaner, but he has more difficulty with the plot, a knock-off of Hitchcock's *To Catch a Thief*. Suave Christopher Plummer does a dandy David Niven impersonation as the jewel thief falsely accused of stealing the famous Pink Panther gem, and Herbert Lom is perfect as Clouseau's frustrated superior. But the real question, voiced by Lom, is "How can an idiot be a policeman?" Easy—if you're Peter Sellers, the real, and much missed, jewel of the *Pink Panther* series.

—TS

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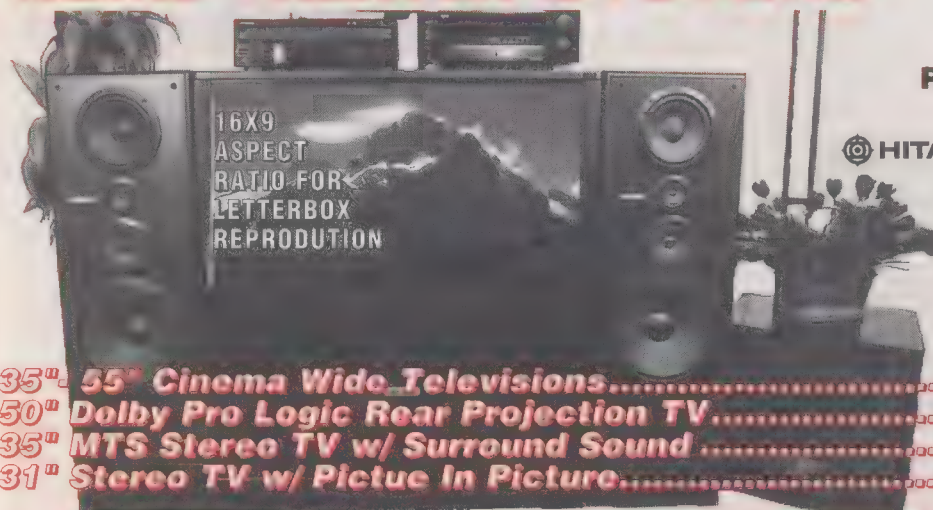
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HIGHLIGHTS

Arabian Nights

1942. Jon Hall, Maria Montez, Sabu; dir. John Rawlins. Technicolor adventure in Baghdad. Mono, cc. (NR) 97 min. VHS \$14.98. LD (double feature with new release *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*) \$59.98. MCA/Universal.

A Christmas Story

1984. Peter Billingsley, Darren McGavin, Melinda Dillon; dir. Bob Clark. Jean Shepherd's *In God We Trust, All Others Pay Cash* was the basis for the positively sidesplitting story of Ralphie, who only wants a Red Ryder BB gun for Christmas. A must-see! Mono, letterboxed. (PG) 95 min. LD \$34.98. MGM/UA.

A Far Off Place

1993. Reese Witherspoon, Ethan Randall, Maximilian Schell; dir. Mikael Salomon. Family fare: Two teens—witnesses to a poaching—take 1,000-mile escape route across the Kalahari Desert. Surround, cc. (PG) 107 min. VHS, Beta \$94.95. LD (letterboxed) \$39.99. Walt Disney.

Gift

1993. Perry Farrell, Casey Niccoli, Sunshine; dirs. Farrell, Niccoli. A 16mm film effort—complete with cameo from Ice-T—from the frontman for alternative bands Jane's Addiction and Porno for Pyros. Stereo.

My Way or the Highway

Audrey Hepburn and Albert Finney duke it out in *Two For The Road*.



eo. (NR) 88 min. VHS only, \$19.98. Warner Reprise.

The Haunting

1963. B&W. Julie Harris, Claire Bloom, Richard Johnson; dir. Robert Wise. Based on Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*—and truly fear-inducing. Mono, letterboxed. (G) 112 min. LD \$34.98. MGM/UA.

The Last Days of Chez Nous

1993. Lisa Harrow, Bruno Ganz, Kerry Fox; dir. Gillian Armstrong. From the director of *My Brilliant Career*: Aussie film-festival

winner recounts story of unraveling household. Stereo, cc (R) 96 min. VHS priced for rental. LD \$39.99. New Line.

Magical Mystery Tour

1967. Psychedelic hokey from the Beatles, but some great songs ("The Magical Mystery Tour," "I Am the Walrus"). Stereo. (G) 60 min. LD \$29.98. MPI.

The Mary Tyler Moore Show

1970-77. 7 vols. Fourteen episodes—alas, in the EP speed—to brighten a nothing day, with Mary, Lou, Murray, Ted and, of course, Chuckles the Clown. Mono. 50 min. each. VHS only, \$9.99 each. United American.

Miles Ahead: The Music of Miles Davis

1986 comp. B&W/color. PBS documentary on the jazz innovator. Also new in the "Masters of American Music" series: *Sarah Vaughn: The Divine One*. Stereo. 60 min. VHS \$29.98. LD \$39.98. BMG.

Posse

1993. Mario Van Peebles, Stephen Baldwin, Billy Zane, Big Daddy Kane; dir. Van Peebles. A fresh look at the Old West. Stereo, cc. (R) 113 min. VHS \$94.99. LD \$34.95. PolyGram.

The Silence of the Lambs

1991. Jodie Foster, Anthony Hopkins; dir. Jonathan Demme. Good enough to eat: the deluxe laserdisc edition, with commentary and production history. Stereo. (R) 118 min. LD (letterboxed) \$99.95. Criterion.

Two for the Road

1967. Albert Finney, Audrey Hepburn; dir. Stanley Donen. Dose of reality: Rocky relationship revisited as husband and wife motor through France. Mono. (NR) 112 min. VHS only, \$19.98. FoxVideo.

Wise Cracks

1992. Stand-up women: Whoopi Goldberg,

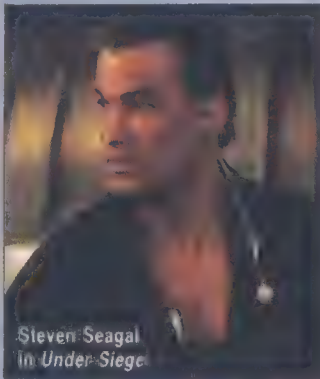
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Lights! Camera! Action! Warner is unstoppable with its three latest \$19.98 titles: *Lethal Weapon 3*, *Passenger 57* and *Under Siege*. For a different kind of action (where you do the sweating), Richard Simmons' *Sweatin' to the Oldies 3* is now \$19.99 from GoodTimes, while Jane Fonda's workouts are also repriced, now ranging from \$14.97 to \$24.97 from A*Vision.

As for more feature films, what a hodgepodge! For \$20: Paramount's *Boomerang* and *Patriot Games*; Columbia TriStar's *Diary of a Hitman* (with *The Crying Game*'s Forest Whitaker) and *The Rapture*; MGM/UA's *Of Mice and Men*, *Stalin* and *The Tenth Man*; plus *The Public Eye* and Zeffrelli's *La Traviata* from MCA/Universal.

And around \$15: from MCA/Universal, *Holiday Inn* and *Going My Way*, plus six new Abbott and Costello titles—including *Here Come the Co-Eds* and *Abbott and Costello Meet the Mummy*; the first glimpse of the Waltons, *The Homecoming*, from FoxVideo; and "spooktacular" Disney offerings, including *The Watcher in the Woods*, *Something Wicked This Way Comes* and *Blackbeard's Ghost*.

In the wonderful world of laser, FoxVideo has more price reductions: *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *The Man From Snowy River*, \$24.98; *My Darling Clementine*, \$29.98; and *South Pacific* and *All That Jazz*, \$34.98. —APB





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continued from page 118

Paula Poundstone, Ellen DeGeneres, Kim Wayans and more. Stereo (NR) 93 min. VHS only, \$49.95. Monarch.

COMEDY

Cop and a Half

1993. Burt Reynolds, Norman D. Golden II; dir. Henry Winkler. The Tampa Police Department's newest cop isn't long out of kindergarten himself. Surround, cc. (PG) 93 min. VHS priced for rental. LD (letterboxed) \$34.98. MCA/Universal.

The Golden Boat

1991. Michael Kirby, Federico Muehnik; dir. Raul Ruiz. Jim Jarmusch, Annie Sprinkle and Barbet Schroeder are among the characters who pop up when a street person and a rock critic take their quest—the search for the star of a Mexican soap opera—to the streets of New York City. Stereo. (NR) 90 min. VHS only, \$59.95. Picture Start (312-769-2489).

The Night We Never Met

1993. Annabella Sciorra, Matthew Broderick; wr./dir. Warren Leight. Three roommates—who've never seen each other. Stereo, cc. (R) 99 min. VHS only, priced for rental. HBO

The Pickle

1993. Danny Aiello, Dyan Cannon, Shelley Winters; pr./wr./dir. Paul Mazursky. Showbiz spoof akin to *The Producers*, with *The Pickle* (starring Ally Sheedy, Griffin Dunne, Isabella Rossellini and Little Richard) as its *Springtime for Hitler*. Surround, cc. (R) 103 min. VHS priced for rental. LD \$34.95. Columbia TriStar.

Tales From the Gimli Hospital

1988. B&W. Kyle McCulloch, Michael Gotti; wr./dir. Guy Maddin. Surreal, bizarre account of the relationship between two men sharing a hospital room during a smallpox epidemic, with touches of Luis Bunuel, David Lynch, F.W. Murnau and other auteurs. Mono (NR) 72 min. VHS only, \$79.95. Kino (800-562-3330).

DRAMA

Chain of Desire

1993. Linda Fiorentino, Elias Koteas, Malcolm McDowell; wr./dir. Temistocles Lopez. Oh-so-steamy. Stereo. (NR) 107 min. VHS \$92.95. Beta \$29.95. Prism.

Danzon

1993. Maria Rojo; dir. Maria Novaro. Well-reviewed Mexican film tracks dance-hall denizen as she searches for her missing partner. Mono, subtitled. (PG) 103 min. VHS only, priced for rental. Columbia TriStar.

Jack the Bear

1993. Danny DeVito; dir. Marshall Herskovitz. Single father of two has some growing up of his own to do. Surround, cc. (PG-13) 101 min. VHS priced for rental. LD (letterboxed) \$39.98. FoxVideo.

The McKenzie Break

1970. Brian Keith, Helmut Griem, Ian Hendry; dir. Lamont Johnson. WWII action: German POWs make their move to escape.

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Shanghai Express

1932. B&W. Marlene Dietrich, Clive Brook, Anna May Wong; dir. Josef von Sternberg. Stagecoach-type cavalcade of characters aboard a train in China during civil war. Won an Academy Award—deservedly—for cinematography. Other Dietrich vehicles new to video: *Golden Earrings*, *Morocco* and *Scarlet Empress*. Mono, cc. (NR) 82 min. VHS \$14.98. LD (double feature with *Blonde Venus*) \$59.98. MCA/Universal.

KIDVID

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

1979. Anim. Emmy winner, from C.S. Lewis story: Instead of mothballs, four children discover the magical land of Narnia in an old wardrobe. Mono, cc. 95 min. VHS only, \$12.98. Republic.

The Nature Connection

1991. 6 vols. Discovery Channel series, led by Dr. David Suzuki, takes kids on 12 hands-on environmental tours from Newfoundland to Costa Rica. Mono. 60 min. each. VHS only, \$19.95 each. Janson Associates (201-784-8488).

Our First Video

1993. America's favorite twins, Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen from *Full House*, star. Stereo. 30 min. VHS only, \$12.98. BMG Kidz/Zoom Express.

A Wish for Wings That Work

1991. Anim. Holiday happenings with Berke Breathed's *Opus* and Bill. Stereo, cc. 30 min. VHS \$12.98. LD \$24.98. MCA/Universal.

MUSIC

Concerto!

1993. 6 vols. Dudley Moore talks to six soloists—including flutist James Galway, clarinetist Richard Stoltzman and pianist Alicia de Larrocha—with informative segments followed by performances. With the London Symphony Orchestra. Stereo. 51 min. each. VHS \$9.98 each. LD \$19.98 each. BMG Classics.

Das Rheingold

1991. Daniel Barenboim conducts this new production of Wagner's "Ring" cycle, set in the present and filmed in HDTV. *Die Walkure* is also available now, with *Siegfried* and *Götterdämmerung* slated for '94. Stereo. 153 min. VHS \$44.95. LD \$59.95. Teldec.

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The Albert Achievement Awards

1993 comp. Thirteen years worth of Marv Albert's silly sports moments. Stereo, cc. 40 min. VHS only, \$14.98. CBS/Fox.

Bad Golf Made Easier

1993. *The Naked Gun*'s Leslie Nielsen on the links. Stereo, cc. 40 min. VHS only, \$19.98. ABC.

Ballroom Dancing:

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1991. If *Strictly Ballroom* whetted your appetite for more sambas and foxtrots...Stereo. 60 min. VHS only, \$29.98. V.I.E.W. (800-843-9843).

King Tut: The Face of Tutankhamun

1992. B&W/color. 4 vols. The lure—and the loot—of the ancient Egyptian pharaoh. For Tut-maniacs, see also *Tut: The Boy King*, and NBC News special recently released by Monterey Home Video (818-597-0047). Mono. 200 min. VHS only, \$79.95 set. A&E (800-423-1212).

Seeing Red

1984. Oscar-nominated indie documentary: 50 years of American Communism, with talking heads ranging from Pete Seeger to J. Edgar Hoover. Mono. (NR) 100 min. VHS only, \$29.95. Facets (800-331-6197).

LASERDISCS

The Barefoot Contessa

1954. Ava Gardner, Humphrey Bogart; wr./dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz. Tinseltown silliness: making a silk purse out of a sow's ear, or, how a nobody becomes big in Hollywood. Mono. (NR) 128 min. \$39.98. MGM/UA.

The Connery Collection Volume II

1993 comp. Bond, more Bond: *Thunderball*, *You Only Live Twice* and *Diamonds Are Forever*, plus trailers for all three. MGM/UA is also boxing Clint, with three Eastwood-Sergio Leone spaghetti westerns led by *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*. Mono, letterboxed. (PG) 391 min. \$99.98. MGM/UA.

Felix!

1993 comp. B&W/color. The wonderful, wonderful cat, as he appeared from 1919-30. Mono. 60 min. CAV 2 sides. \$39.95. Lumivision (800-776-5864).

The Makioka Sisters

1983. Keiko Kishi, Yoshiko Sakuma; dir. Kon Ichikawa. Four daughters of privilege grow up in early 20th-century Japan. Mono, subtitled. (NR) 140 min. \$69.95. Criterion.

Musee d'Orsay

1991 comp. Name-dropping here includes Delacroix, Millet, Manet, Corot, Rousseau, Pissarro, Monet, Renoir, Degas, van Gogh, Gauguin, Bonnard, Cezanne and more. Stereo. 360 min. CAV 12 sides. \$199.95. Lumivision (800-776-5864).

The Night of the Hunter

1955. B&W. Robert Mitchum, Lillian Gish, Shelley Winters; dir. Charles Laughton. Seven years before *Cape Fear*, Mitchum was menacing two kids in this chiller, hyped with: "The scenes! The story! The stars! But above all—the suspense!". Mono. (NR) 93 min. \$34.98. MGM/UA.

Polyester

1981. Divine, Tab Hunter; dir. John Waters. Lots of supplemental trash, like production photos and early Super 8 films. Mono, letterboxed. (R) 83 min. \$49.95. Criterion.

The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes

1970. Robert Stephens, Colin Blakely, Genevieve Page; dir. Billy Wilder. In the twilight of Wilder's career, a personal, pleasing film, long overlooked but boasting a marvelous Miklos Rozsa score and fine performances. Mono, letterboxed. (PG) 125 min. \$59.99. MGM/UA.

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with a kiss and instead turns a profit by displaying her in a theme park dubbed "Sleeping Beauty Land."

Disney's Buena Vista label acquired the Bullwinkle series in 1990 and released six tapes in 1991 at \$12.99 apiece; six more followed last year. The company restored the 30-year-old cartoons enhancing both color and sound, but purists were dismayed to find the series' rambling storylines had been severely edited to fit one complete story onto each tape. Image Entertainment has released four double-length *Rocky and Bullwinkle* laserdiscs at \$39.39 each. Few other cartoons from the period are worth noting, as the form deteriorated into "hour-long commercials for toy companies," according to Doug Ranney, publisher of the *Whole Toon Catalog*.

TOON REVIVAL

Two turning points helped revive animation's reputation after its low point in the '50s and '60s, and eventually led to the current boom on tape and disc. The first was the huge theatrical success of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988), which combined human and cartoon characters in a huge box-office smash. "Suddenly the word 'toon' became a

popular part of the vocabulary," says MGM/UA's Feltenstein. (Ironically, because *Rabbit* was distributed by Disney, the video editions have disappeared from store shelves.)

The second key event in the cartoon renaissance was the arrival of adult-oriented Japanese animation in theaters and on video. Violent, witty, sexually explicit and often very bizarre, it brought the mythos of adult comic books into the video world. Japanimation, or *Anime*, runs the gamut from action-adventure and action-comedy to erotic sci-fi violence and intimate human drama. It is largely based on Japanese comic books, which account for 60 percent of the magazines sold in that country.

Extremely popular among adults in Japan—where 100 animated titles are released on video each month—these cartoons rework old movie and story themes, sometimes in original and disturbing ways. Central Park Media's *Project A-Ko* (\$29.95), a sci-fi thriller set in a girls' school, has a lesbian subtext and an incomprehensible plot, while *Urotsukidoji: The Legend of the Overfiend* (\$39.95) couples disturbing erotic images with graphic violence. The animation itself has a stylized—if not terribly

fluid—punch.

Overfiend set house records at one New York City theater, selling out 24 weekends in a row as a midnight movie. By the time the cartoon came to video, it had been shown theatrically in 48 other cities and had been chosen as one of the lead titles at the Montreal Film Festival in October '93. *Project A-Ko* was premiered at the Dallas Museum of Art, while *Akira* became the first and only animated film to find a place in Voyager's hallowed Criterion Collection laserdisc series.

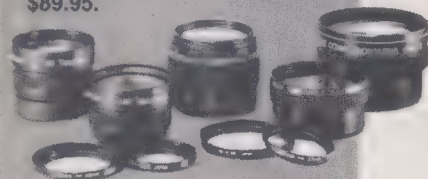
Such respectability for cartoons has opened many doors and given a wider outlet to independent animation. *The Tune*, Bill Plympton's bizarre feature about a songwriter in search of a song, has just been released on tape by Tribo Entertainment. *Plymptoons* (\$34.95), a compilation of the animator's shorter works is out on laserdisc from Lumivision. It features his award-winning shorts, TV commercials and even a failed sitcom.

Lumivision has released a wide variety of disc-only independent animation titles, generally priced at \$34.95. Included are the Japanese-made *Twilight of the Cockroaches*, a surreal composite of live

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TECH TIPS

The place for parts

Video/audio do-it-yourselfers usually have trouble finding the electronic parts they need, but most overlook an outstanding source—professional audio dealers. Pro sound dealers specialize in public-address systems and recording studio gear, and their stores are usually packed with top-quality parts and accessories useful for the amateur.

My recent visit to Audio Concepts, a major pro sound store in New York City, turned up high-quality, cast-aluminum project boxes, excellent and affordably priced video and audio cable (the Canare line is particularly good), speaker components, sturdy RCA plugs, and all sorts of wire ties and other musts for the electronics buff. The quality of the merchandise is much better than you'll find at most electronics stores—pro audio guys don't mess around with cheap stuff!

—Brent Butterworth

Onscreen music index

If you use your hi-fi VCR for audio recording of CDs and you have a video titler or a personal computer with a composite video output jack, you can

create an onscreen index for the music you record. Connect the output of the titler or computer to the VCR's video input, and connect the CD player to the VCR's audio input. Using the titler or a word-processing program, list the artists, albums, song titles and the length of each song on the screen.

Start the VCR and CD player, and position your computer's cursor over the title of the song being played. As each new song begins, move the cursor to the next title. With a video titler like Video-nics' TitleMaker, you can create a separate screen for each song. This will give you a record of what's on the tape, and an easy way of scanning through the tape to find the songs you want.

John Pessamato
Williamsport, Pennsylvania

Calling all tipsters

Do you know something we don't about VCRs, TVs, camcorders and other home video equipment? We'll share it with our readers if you share it with us as a "Tech Tip." We'll also give you credit and a \$25 bounty for each tip we publish. Tips should be informative and to the point. Please include your name, address and phone number—and a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you wish your submission returned. Send submissions to Tech Tips, *Video Magazine*, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001.

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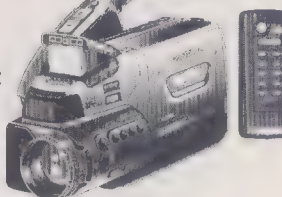
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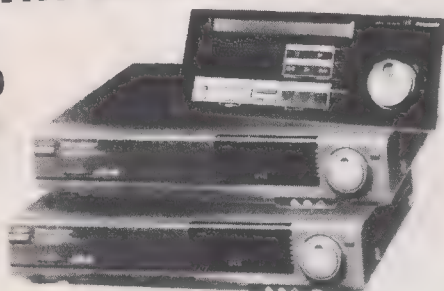
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action and animation that tells the saga of life in a cockroach family; *Ardman Animations*, five shorts from England, including the Academy Award-winning *Creature Comforts*, about a philosophical puma and his friends; and *Bruno Bozzetto Animator*, featuring the work of an Italian animator dubbed the "Walt Disney of Europe."

"A lot of the popularity has to do with accessibility," says Jamie White, president of Lumivision. "Laserdiscs and tapes are creating more of a demand for animation. The more people see, the more they want to know about it. Seeing it often piques one's interest in classic animation, too. They're all replayable. Even some of the stuff from the '20s is fascinating."

Yet there is more to animation's popularity than history, accessibility or even collectability. "As the baby boomers progress demographically into a higher age group, the stuff they've always liked enters the mainstream," observes *Whole Toon Catalog's* Ranney. "Our generation grew up watching cartoons," adds John O'Donnell, managing director at Central Park Media, which distributes much of the Japanimation. "I read Marvel Comics, which are more adult-oriented than Archie or Casper. The baby boomers have the attitude that comics and cartoons are fun."

There's an even simpler reason for the new popularity of animation, however. Beyond the anarchy, the color and the music, cartoons appeal to the rebellious Everyman in all of us, to the little boy or girl who wants to have the last word. "They are mirrors of what we do," observes animator Chuck Jones in his autobiography *Chuck Amuck*. "Or, in the case of the comic hero, what we would like to be able to do. We are all Daffy Ducks inside."

Tha--tha--that's all, folks! ■

TECH TIP

Easy eraser

Artists' kneaded erasers (also known as art gum) are the best to use for erasing temporary labels on videocassettes that are used over and over. These erasers leave no debris that might find its way into the cassette or your VCR. Be sure not to use shiny-surfaced labels. A regular No. 2 pencil works best with this type of eraser. Kneaded erasers cost less than a dollar at art-supply stores.

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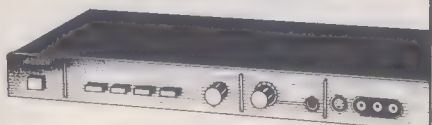
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VHS VCR

continued from page 35

video/stereo audio inputs and outputs, and F-connectors for antenna/cable input and output.

The remote control is far more interesting. Its main feature is a ring of buttons with sloped edges. Clockwise from top, they are play/2x, fast forward, pause and rewind. This makes finding and using the buttons by feel incredibly easy. The center of the ring forms a comfortable indent for your thumb. By sliding your thumb, you can easily activate any of the four functions. Holding down the fast forward or rewind button in search mode gives you high-speed search. From an ergonomic standpoint, the design is innovative and functional.

The other noteworthy features of the remote are its VCR Plus button, which activates a menu that asks for a VCR Plus code; shift buttons that let you go backward and forward in a menu to correct mistakes; buttons for frame advance and slow motion; and tracking controls. A program button lets you set the M-659's timer in a conventional on-screen manner. The remote also controls channel, volume, input select, display and power for most popular brands of TV.

The only problem you'll have operating the M-659 is setting it up to control the cable box, and change the cable channel designations if necessary. But you only do these tasks once—unless your cable company swaps boxes on you. You may need the manual to figure out these functions, so don't lose it. We rate ease of use very good.

Picture quality is good, comparable to that of most name-brand, midpriced VCRs. The measurements at the SP speed are very good, while those at EP are average. This is a great deck for recording at SP and playing rented movies, but not so good if you like to record in EP.

Audio quality is also good, but this rating too represents the average of disparate results. The good news is the hi-fi audio measurements are very good. For home theater use, these are by far the most important. The mono linear-track performance is only fair, with some high-frequency roll-off and rather low signal-to-noise ratio.

Overall, the M-659 deserves a rating between good and very good. Its solid video performance at SP and impressive hi-fi audio make it a great deck for home theater, especially at the reasonable price of \$450. And don't forget, the price includes the great feature of VCR Plus with cable box control.

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SP, 40.7 EP; weighted
video—48.8 SP, 48.3
EP; chroma AM—46.6
SP, 38.3 EP; chroma
PM—41.1 SP, 37.2 EP

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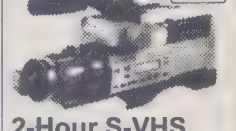
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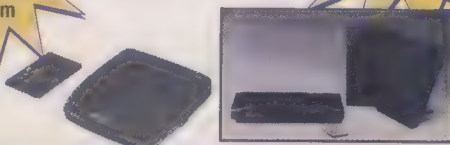
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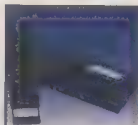
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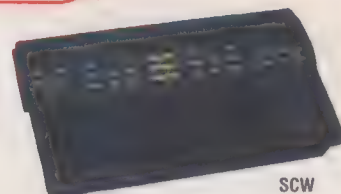
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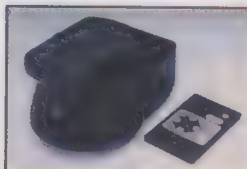
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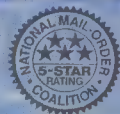
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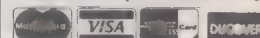
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136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150
151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165
166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195

Allow 6-8 weeks for delivery. Card expires 2/19/94 RS 1193

- What size is your primary viewing TV?
20"-25" ☐ A ☐ 27"-25" ☐ B ☐ 25"-27" ☐ C ☐ 35"+ ☐ D ☐
- Approximately how many hours per day do you watch TV?
0-2 ☐ E ☐ 3-5 ☐ F ☐ 6-10 ☐ G ☐
- How far in advance do you plan your TV viewing?
1 hour ☐ H ☐ 1 day ☐ I ☐ 1 week ☐ J ☐ No Planning ☐ K ☐
- Do you tape "series" programming (i.e. soap operas, mini-series)?
Yes ☐ L ☐ No ☐ M ☐
- Which sources do you use to plan TV viewing?
Daily Newspaper ☐ N ☐ Cable Guide ☐ O ☐ Weekly Newspaper Insert ☐ P ☐
TV Guide ☐ Q ☐ Other ☐ R ☐
- How many programs do you tape per week?
1-5 ☐ S ☐ 5-7 ☐ T ☐ 7+ ☐ U ☐
- If programming your VCR was made easier would you record additional shows?
Yes ☐ V ☐ No ☐ W ☐
- Are you currently a subscriber to VIDEO? Yes ☐ X ☐ No ☐ Y ☐

Please circle product numbers to receive desired information

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75
76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105
106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120
121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135
136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150
151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165
166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195

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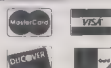
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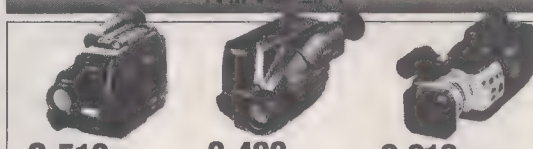
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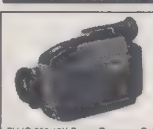
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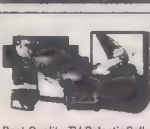
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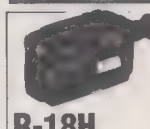
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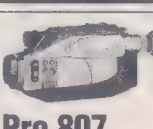
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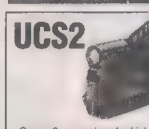
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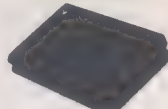


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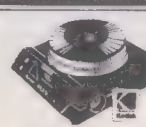
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H18 CAMCORDER

continued from page 40

relatively constant on the CCD sensor. Unlike most electronic image stabilizers, optical stabilizers don't degrade video images. Using the stabilizer trims three or four minutes from the battery life.

Assistant editor Brian Clark and senior editor Brent Butterworth, who conducted an image stabilizer test seven months ago (see "Curing the Video Jitters," Apr. '93), tried the UCS5's stabilizer and found it generally superior to electronic stabilizers. However, both prefer the response of the optical stabilizer in the TR101. On static shots, both stabilizers work perfectly. But the UCS5's stabilizer tends to drift at the ends of pans and tilts, a problem we didn't encounter with the TR101.

The camcorder's other features include a 12x optical zoom with digital extension to 24x, a 16:9 widescreen mode that squeezes the picture for playback on the new 16:9 TVs, and programmed auto exposure with options for standard auto (with or without backlight compensation), sports, portrait, spotlight, sand/snow and landscape.

The sophisticated auto exposure helps make up for the camcorder's lack of a manual iris. It combines center-weighted metering with 64-zone evaluation metering plus memorized shutter and iris formulas. You won't notice all this stuff operating, and that's the point—it's supposed to eliminate the need for manual control. Advanced videographers will miss manual iris and shutter control, though.

The UCS5 also packs a lot of useful features, like menu options for tally light on/off (no more electrical tape plastered over the light) and remote control on/off. It has hold-down or trigger-operated fade, but unfortunately, it's to white, not black. Some UC-series camcorders have included the industry's most versatile titlers, but surprisingly, the UCS5 has none at all.

Following the pattern set by past UC-series camcorders, the UCS5 is held vertically. Holding it is like clamping a book between your hands. Early UC-series camcorders were difficult for people with large hands to use—they had to bend their fingers way over to use the zoom—but the UCS5 has been redesigned to solve this problem.

Part of the redesign is a cylinder that extends along the upper left side. The cylinder houses the power/camera/VCR mode switch and a zoom lever. Unlike zoom rockers, which are oriented along the line of sight, the lever moves perpendicular to the line of sight. It's much easier to get your fingers on this lever than on earlier UC-series zoom rockers, but operating it is not instinctive—you have to learn that wide-angle is to the left, telephoto is to the right.

The viewfinder tilts up for low-angle shooting. Underneath, you'll find a few seldom-used controls, like menu and edit search. The top has an accessory shoe with power contacts for an optional VL-7 video light that uses power from the camcorder's battery.

The usually cluttered left side seems almost bare. Just behind the lens cowl is a switch for the stabilizer, followed by a large rotary control for the AE modes

with the BLC button at its center. There's also a switch that selects between 24x digital zoom, normal zoom and 16:9 mode, and buttons for hold-down type fade and date/time imprint.

At the bottom edge is an on/off button for autofocus plus a rotary control for manual focus. This convenient arrangement allows more natural and precise focusing than plus/minus buttons. The stereo mic can be set for normal, narrow, wide and zoom pickup patterns, and it has a switchable wind noise filter. The standby switch is a moveable flap that covers the run/stop button until you fold it out, which switches the camcorder on.

The camcorder carries a full jack complement, including S-video/video/stereo audio input/output, LANC (for interfacing with edit controllers and desktop video products), headphones and external mic. All are essential for advanced videography.

The remote control is the same as used with most Canon camcorders. It has transport controls plus buttons for wide/tele zoom, camera run/stop, counter reset and onscreen display on/off.

Each generation of UC-series camcorders (this is the third) has improved operational control by either simplifying the controls or removing less-used features. This one does both. There are many fewer exposed buttons—just eight on the left and seven on top. The stabilizer and focus controls are particularly easy to find and use because they're separated from the others. To operate the auto exposure control, simply run your finger along its notched edge.

Picture quality is very good—quite

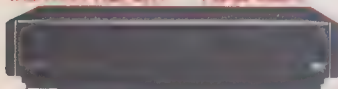
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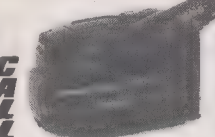
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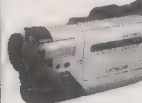


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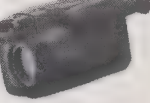


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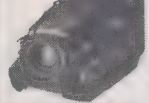


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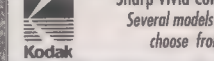
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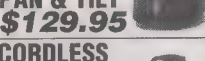
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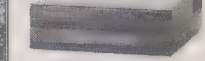
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respectable, but a notch below the best Sony and Canon Hi8s, which tend to achieve very good to excellent ratings. The recorder section has a horizontal resolution of 370 lines, which is a bit below the 400 lines Hi8 is capable of. (The camera achieves full 400-line resolution, though.) Audio quality is very good, comparable to or better than almost all Hi8 camcorders.

We were very pleased with test shots we took with the UCS5. Although a resolution chart revealed the slightly low horizontal resolution discussed above, we would never have noticed otherwise. The color of the UCS5's picture was especially pleasing, with unusually vivid tones and high saturation. This gives the picture a look almost like a Technicolor movie. This extra touch of color should really help indoors, where poor lighting tends to drain the picture of color.

Whites and blacks were quite clean, free of coloration and noise. The only noticeable problem is a bit of chroma PM noise, which makes areas of solid red or orange color look active—the color changes in places, creating a slight pulsating effect. However, we only noticed this problem on strong red areas, and most other camcorders share this fault.

The autofocus is one of the best we've tried. It's blazingly fast, even at full telephoto. It pulses only slightly in low light, and for a through-the-lens system, that's outstanding stability.

The sound of the integral mic is quite good, with only a trace of the thinness typical of camcorder mics. We couldn't hear any transport noise leaking into the mic, although a little bit of noise from the autofocus motor leaks in from time to time.

We rate the UCS5 very good to excellent overall. Although advanced videographers may miss manual control of shutter and iris, the UCS5 offers one of the best combinations of Hi8 quality and user-friendly design we've seen to date. ■

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SLV-400...234.99	SLV-700HF...334.99
SLV-595HF...329.99	SLV-750HF...384.99
SLV-696HF...369.99	SLV-900HF...419.99
SLV-R5...799.99	SLV-R1000...CALL

8MM VCRs

EV-C40...CALL	EV-S2000...CALL
EV-A50...334.99	EV-C100...CALL
EV-S550...449.99	GV-S50...739.99
EV-S3000...1209.99	GV-M20...549.99


BETA VCRs

SL-S600...264.99	SL-HF2000...CALL
SL-HF360...349.99	SL-HF2100...1099.99

SONY LASER DISCS

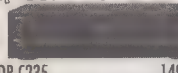
MDP-455...349.99	MDP-605...539.99
MDP-600...CALL	
MDP-K5 KARAOKE...729.99	

SONY RECEIVERS



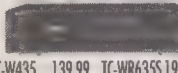
STR-D 2090...609.99	STR-D 711...269.99
STR-D 1011...389.99	STR-D 611...234.99
STR-D 911...279.99	STR-D 511...164.99
STR-D 311...124.99	

SONY COMPACT DISC



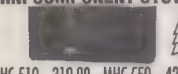
CDP-C235...149.99	
CDP-C335...164.99	CDP-C625...229.99
CDP-C435...189.99	CDP-C735...269.99
CDP-C535...229.99	CDP-C910...279.99
MZ-1 Mini Disk Portable Recorder...579.99	
RME-300 479.99	RME-700...629.99

SONY CASSETTE DECKS



TC-W435...139.99	TC-WR635S...199.99
TC-WR535...154.99	TC-CS...219.99
TCK-6115...249.99	

SONY MINI COMPONENT SYSTEM



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Panasonic

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PIONEER RECEIVERS



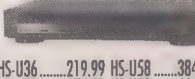
VXK-D15...769.99	VXK-502...299.99
VXK-D902S...689.99	VXK-452...229.99
VXK-D702S...499.99	VXK-402...199.99
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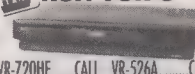
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PRO 883...CALL	CC-412...CALL
PRO 840...CALL	CC-190...CALL
PRO 830...CALL	CC-188...CALL
PRO 808...CALL	CC-178...CALL
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VR-601HF...CALL	VR-321...CALL
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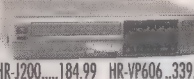


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VT-M262A...CALL	VT-F462A...CALL
VT-F361A...CALL	VT-F551A...CALL

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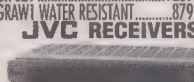
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HR-1400...204.99	HR-VP700...374.99
HR-1600...284.99	HR-S 4700...419.99
HR-VP404...CALL	HR-S 4900...CALL
HR-VP604...314.99	HR-S 6800...559.99
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CAMCORDERS JVC



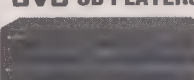
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GR-AX35U...569.99	GR-M5U...534.99
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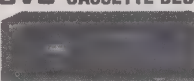
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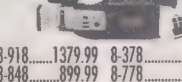


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AG-455
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Panasonic CAMCORDER



AG-195
VHS Camcorder with Digital Special Effects, 8x Zoom lens with 2 speeds, Digital 12x or 100x zooms, Digital Special Effects like wipe, fade, strobe and mix.

Panasonic EDIT SYSTEM



AG-1970
S-VHS/VHS editing, insert and assemble edit, Hi-Fi Stereo sound. Jog shuttle search, and Multiple programmable edits

Panasonic AG-EP60



COLOR VIDEO PRINTER

Capable of making prints from VCR's, Camcorders, Cameras, TVs and Computers. Split print features produce passport photos.

Panasonic AG-7650 / AG-7750 / AG-A770



4 channels of audio, on screen menu, Pro SVHS editing system w/built-in digital TBC & noise reduction for excellent multi-generation dubbing quality, 4 CH of audio/on screen menu for set-up and data, RS-422 controller has 128 event memory, auto-tag and split editing for fast and accurate editing (4+0 frames accuracy w/TX)

Panasonic DS-2550 (WV-F250HB/ AG-7450/ WV-S290)



3 ft CCD camera package, 700 lines res. for excellent picture quality, SVHS docking recorder with amorphous heads for improved picture quality & long life, complete w/Fujinon 12x lens, shotgun mic & carrying case.

Panasonic WJ-MX50



Digital special effects switcher with 4 VCR and/or composite inputs, 287 digital effects, 4 channel audio mixer w/ balanced XLR/line level audio inputs, chroma & luminance keyer, 2 channel color corrector. Also available WJ-MX30 and WJAVE-5.

Panasonic AG-3 WORLD'S SMALLEST 3 CCD CAMCORDER



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Panasonic AGW1

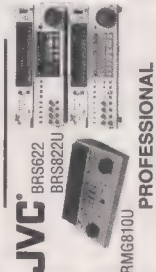


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JVC BR8622
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SONY EVO-9700



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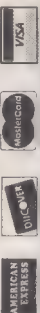
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December 1993	9/30/93	10/7/93
January 1994	11/4/93	11/11/93
February 1994	11/24/93	12/2/93
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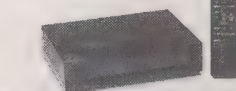
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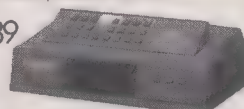
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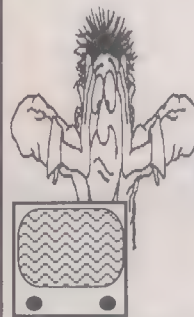
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SUPERBOWL

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positive effects. The panelists agree: This would be a terrific set if the screen weren't so dark. It has only one real flaw—unusually high chroma crawl, a rainbow effect seen on fine patterns like herringbone suits. Color temperature is a reasonable 7,400 Kelvins.

The VT295 has the most fully equipped jack panel of all the sets: two S-video/video/stereo audio inputs, a third input without S-video, an S-video/video/stereo audio output, a variable audio output and two RF inputs. It also has a notch filter.

In its music and movie surround modes, the sound was exceptionally smooth, although the side-firing speakers don't create a strong center image. An X-bass button adds a welcome bass boost. However, in straight stereo, the sound is a little muffled.

If you like to watch TV in a dark room, give this \$1,199 set a look—in the right setting, it could really shine. But if you prefer a little bit more light, you'll probably find the VT295 too dim.

RCA F27700MG

This surprisingly affordable set includes a Hughes Sound Retrieval System (SRS), and a stylish universal remote that controls two VCRs and a cable box. The picture isn't really competitive with those of the \$1,000-and-up sets reviewed here, but for \$699 it's not bad. With a 6,550-Kelvin color temperature, the color is quite accurate. The main fault is a lack of detail. "It's not terribly sharp, but the whites look white," one panelist said. The set domed on a white-window test pattern, but the panelists never noticed the effect during movies.

The sound was better than expected for the price. The SRS adds a very pleasing and realistic ambience without destroying the center image. It has normal and expanded modes.

This set's not in the same league with high-end models like the Panasonic or the ProScan, but it's not intended to be. At \$699, it might be a good choice for a budget-conscious buyer.

SAMSUNG TXB2725

This set is almost \$100 cheaper than any other we evaluated. As you would expect, it doesn't aspire to or achieve the performance levels of the other sets. All the panelists found the set noisy—it superimposed an extraneous texture on the picture. The overall color wasn't too far off at 7,250 Kelvins, but the panelists

often felt the TXB2725 didn't render fleshtones and reds accurately.

The sound was acceptable, but not much better than you'd expect from small TV speakers. The set incorporates music and movie surround modes that don't do much for the sound.

Those seeking a rock-bottom price might do well to consider this set—after all, it does have an S-video input, front inputs (also with S-video), a variable audio output and other nice features, although not a universal remote. Anyone seeking high performance will have to cough up at least \$200 more.

SHARP 27C-S3900

This 1993 model should be in stores for a few more months. Sharp says its upcoming high-end 27-inch will be the same, with the addition of a closed-caption decoder and an onscreen message board.

The Sharp set produced a pleasing picture with one significant flaw—even with the contrast turned up all the way, we couldn't achieve a white level high enough to satisfy the panelists. Most felt the picture quality was good, but all were bothered by the set's rather washed-out look and low contrast.

The skew adjustment was a bit off, resulting in a slight bending of vertical lines in the upper right corner. At 6,800 Kelvins, the color was good, and it became even more impressive when we switched in the set's fleshtone enhancement and "fresh green" functions.

The sound was good—the set has no surround modes, but the speakers sound smooth and offer good bass response. The 27C-S3900 isn't packed with features, but it does have a front input.

This set is good out of the box, especially at its reasonable \$829 price, but we think a different factory calibration might make it great.

SONY KV-27V55

This set proved popular with our panelists; one picked it as his favorite. "Good depth, good detail, good skintones; I like it very much," he said. Another was positive, but more analytical: "Not the best on anything; not brightest or sharpest, but geometry and overscan are just about perfect." The only fault consistently noted was a slight bluish cast, which was surprising given the set's 6,500-Kelvin color temperature.

The set was unusually sensitive to signal level—too little and the picture rolls, too much and the convergence goes out. This is only a problem with very weak broadcast signals though.

The KV-27V55 plays very loudly without distortion. The bass sounds full

compared to the other sets. In fact, we had to turn it down to get good balance.

Try the remote before you buy. It reminds us of a *Star Trek* communicator: It's only about four inches long, with simple controls on top, and it flips open to reveal more controls. It felt flimsy. The video/stereo audio output is a loop-through of one of the video inputs.

With this set, Sony continues its tradition of excellence. We think most people will like it, although a few may be bothered by the bluish cast. The KV-27V55 is one of Sony's affordable V-series sets; the company's XBR models are more directly comparable to the Panasonic and ProScan models.

TOSHIBA CN27C90

This set presented contradictions. A crosshatch pattern revealed poor convergence, and none of the panelists thought the color terribly accurate (color temperature is 7,400 Kelvins). However, all but one of the panelists liked the picture—no one complained of a lack of sharpness or the colored edges that convergence problems produce. Some noted a bit too much dot crawl and a touch of luminance noise. Like other Toshibas, the color looks a little unusual—perhaps a bit muted—but the picture is still very appealing.

The sound was also pleasing, with big bass from the set's Cyclone subwoofer (you can switch it off, but you won't want to). The set includes a nice DSP surround mode that has a more dramatic effect than the RCA set's SRS, but without such a solid center image.

Overall, this set's a crowd-pleaser. Seek it out—its look may appeal to you, especially at its reasonable \$899 price.

ZENITH SL2784BT

The panelists couldn't ignore this set's three significant problems: a ringing effect (translucent black bars) on the left side, a likely result of poor power-supply shielding; a slight horizontal rippling that moved up the screen, probably also due to power-supply interference; and an overall greenish cast to the blacks that we couldn't banish with the color and tint controls. We've noticed similar artifacts in some other Zenith sets. That's a shame, because the color was otherwise good, with a temperature of 7,500 Kelvins, and detail was impressive.

On bass and the all-important voices, the sound was especially good. It has a soundstage expansion circuit and a surround speaker output.

This set is priced reasonably for the features it offers, but we found its picture problems impossible to overlook. ■

A touch of etiquette

It was a storybook night in Manhattan's Central Park. In perfect weather, a mellow crowd sprawled on the Great Lawn with picnic baskets listening to a concert by Luciano Pavarotti, one of the world's great tenors. Then, suddenly, a scuffle broke out near the stage. Thousands of heads turned to see what could mar such a tranquil evening.

A man with a camcorder, determined to capture Pavarotti on home video, stood, blocking the view of dozens of concertgoers. The people behind him booed and cursed, demanding he sit down. But this determined videophile didn't take the hint. He turned, snapped back at the crowd, and continued rolling tape. Only after a brief scuffle did two larger men in the crowd force the self-appointed Captain Video to take his seat.

Incidents like this happen everywhere these days. At graduations, school plays, weddings and other events, aggressive camcorder users often annoy others in pursuit of personal tapes. At parties, you're likelier than ever to find a camcorder aimed in your direction in an unwelcome attempt to elicit some comment or action. Even in public spaces, it's no longer unusual to feel your priva-

cy invaded by a nearby videographer. Or you may be the one wielding the camcorder, fielding the complaints of others or the stare of an unfriendly subject.

With so much "in your face" videography going on, how's a person to keep from feeling like a victim of video—or from unintentionally turning into a boorish camcorder commando? Isn't it time to establish some informal rules of video etiquette for shooting situations? We asked Judith Martin, the author and syndicated columnist better known as Miss Manners, and Robert Ellis Smith, publisher of the *Privacy Journal*, for their advice.

"The use of camcorders is an annoyance to a lot of people," says Martin. "I don't want to minimize the pleasure of souvenirs, but if the times are made miserable through the photographing of them and if people you love begin to hate you because they think you are pestering them, then it's not going to work."

"Events like weddings and children's birthday parties have turned into nothing but photo opportunities, to the point where the actual event itself is altered and sometimes ruined through the photographing of it," Martin observes. "You end up with nothing but a souvenir of an unhappy time."

Martin offers three simple rules videophiles should follow:

- Ask before you shoot.
- Don't harass or bully people who decline to be part of your video.
- Be sensitive to the type of event you want to record and how you will record it.

Weddings can be particularly touchy. "It's important to recognize that a wedding is a ceremony and not a show," says Martin. "I got a letter recently from someone who suggested that rather than have the bride and bridegroom face the altar they should face the audience. The audience! The people invited to a wedding are not an audience. This is very scary when people start to think of all the events in their

life as show business."

Never shoot video at a wedding without prior permission, Martin advises. When you do, follow the still photographer's practice of being as inconspicuous as possible. "See if you can capture on tape what would have been going on if you had not been there," Martin suggests. "That's the secret of ending up with something worth having."

Those who plan events like graduations and school plays, where videographers are likely to be active, should plan to help amateur photographers, so they don't have to block the view of others, Martin says. She suggests establishing a designated shooting area for all photography, just as is done at press conferences for professional journalists.

Robert Ellis Smith says that more camcorder users are invading their subjects' privacy, going beyond what could be thought of as a breach of manners. "A lot of people have phobias or religious objections to being photographed," says Smith. "One should always ask before shooting video in someone's home or in an informal private setting."

More serious, he notes, are incidents of people being taped without their knowledge. "There are cases of young men secretly videotaping their lovemaking activities without telling their partners," says Smith. "Later, they show the tapes around or use them for extortion."

A growing practice that concerns Smith is the use of camcorders by citizens to secretly record suspected wrongdoing in their neighborhoods or workplaces. It even involves taping police misconduct in the street and documenting sexual harassment. "It's private law enforcement," muses Smith, "and I can't say yet whether this is good or bad."

Though the basic "ask first" rule of video recording sounds like common sense, Martin warns that one should not jump to that conclusion. "The problem with saying it's common sense is that common sense is not always apparent. The person of goodwill who sees a beautiful performance and wants to record it perhaps has not fully thought things through. There are instances where the correct thing to do is not so obvious."



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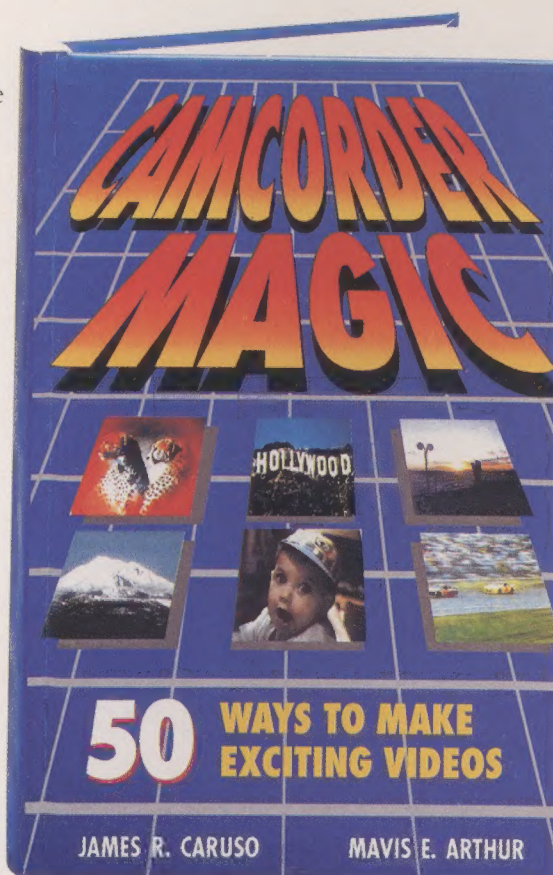
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